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# Demonstrating Identities: Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Canadian-Tamil Identities

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DEMONSTRATING IDENTITIES: CITIZENSHIP, MULTICULTURALISM AND  
CANADIAN-TAMIL IDENTITIES

by  
Anuppiriya Sriskandarajah

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Masters of Arts at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
2010  
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**ABSTRACT**

Using political demonstrations as sites of analysis, this thesis explores popular understandings of diasporic identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework and second generation Sri Lankan Tamil's (SLT) (re)negotiations of these constructions in forming and informing their identities. Through the use of critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews I argue that popular constructions of diasporic identities and Canadian national identity as understood within a multiculturalism framework is not entirely in concurrence with diasporic minorities' identity constructions. The divergences that emerge amongst the discourses demonstrate a need for a more nuanced conceptualization of Canadian multiculturalism and citizenship which should incorporate the idea of transnational political and cultural practices. The current understanding of multiculturalism is still premised on the nation state model in which diasporic identities are seen in juxtaposition to the Canadian national identity. Moving towards a global framework allows for the incorporation of these forms of identities.

**DEDICATION**

To Canada,

A space where I have the right and privilege to criticize and contribute.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

Late 2008 marked the beginning of the final stages of Sri Lanka's 25 year civil conflict. The final offensive by the Sri Lankan army against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) resulted in the conclusion of the war at the expense of thousands of civilian casualties.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that in 2006 the Canadian government listed the LTTE as a terrorist organization, joining the European Union, India, and the US who had already made the designation. The label fell in line with wider security discourses propagated as part of global efforts on the 'war on terror'. The campaign to end the war at any cost incited active political mobilization by the Tamil diaspora worldwide. Often this mobilization was in the form of massive street demonstrations in efforts to amass international attention for the atrocities being committed in Sri Lanka and to garner humanitarian aid and relief. Throughout 2008 and 2009 Toronto public spaces become home for many of these large scale demonstrations and other forms of political engagements by Canadians from the Tamil community. In response to events in Sri Lanka members from the Canadian Tamil<sup>2</sup> community took to the streets articulating their grievances and their many different requests, including the need for protection of human rights, humanitarian aid, international involvement, sanctions, a separate state, support for the LTTE, as well as make their presence known in Canada.

In Toronto, these demonstrations were mainly held downtown in front of the USA Consulate, Ontario Legislative Building at Queen's Park, Sri Lankan Consulate and the Gardiner Expressway.<sup>3</sup> The mass political mobilization garnered great media attention both nationally and internationally, truly attesting to the diasporic nature of the demonstrations. Media attention shed light on both the Sri Lankan conflict as well as the diaspora. However, coverage and public reactions to the demonstrations in Canada were

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<sup>1</sup> As reported by various international organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, & United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Tamil and Tamil Canadian will be used interchangeably to describe SLT in Canada. It is recognized that identity is fluid and to a large degree subjective in how members choose to self identify. Interviewees referred to themselves using both designate and as such this thesis will use the terms interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> On the evening of May 10, 2009, as a result of massive bomb attacks in Sri Lanka the demonstrators blocked part of the Gardiner Expressway in efforts to gain Canadian government and international attention. This major Toronto highway was blocked for hours both ways and it was the first time the highway had been shut down due to a large demonstration.

often framed in rather simplistic terms, mainly as ethnic groups bringing conflicts to Canada, terrorism, and Canadian national identity. These varying discourses reveal a disconnect amongst popular/dominant discourses and those expressed by the diaspora. This is illustrative of the fact that the demonstrations were as much about politics at 'home' as they were about identity 'here' and vice-versa. In the Canadian context, in which diasporic identity is situated within a multiculturalism framework, reactions to the demonstrations calls for a re-evaluation of popular understandings of multiculturalism and its role in identity construction.

Using political demonstrations as sites of analysis, this thesis explores popular understandings of diasporic identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework and second generation <sup>4</sup>Sri Lankan Tamil's (SLT) (re)negotiations of these constructions in forming and informing their identities. I argue that popular constructions of diasporic identities and Canadian national identity as understood within a multiculturalism framework is not entirely in concurrence with diasporic minorities' identity constructions. The divergences that emerge amongst the discourses demonstrate a need for a more nuanced conceptualization of Canadian multiculturalism and citizenship which should incorporate the idea of transnational political and cultural practices. The current understanding of multiculturalism is still premised on the nation state model in which diasporic identities are seen in juxtaposition to the Canadian national identity. However, the assertion of Canadian Tamil identity in public spaces during these demonstrations reveal a disconnect between diasporic conceptualization of citizenship and those espoused by popular discourses. Moving towards a global framework allows for the incorporation of these forms of identities. To understand this form of identity construction I will draw on critiques of multiculturalism (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Arat-Koc, 2005; Bannerji, 2000; Lee & Lutz, 2005; Mackey, 2002; McLaren, 1994; Saul, 2005, p. 176), literature on diasporas (Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001; Hall, 1998; Hall, 2002; Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005; Kleist, 2008, Mavroudi, 2008, Sheffer, 2003) and second generation identities (Eckstein, 2001; Rajiva, 2006; Sundar, 2008; Zhou, 2001) in formulating how I perceive second generation SLT's in Toronto come to understand their identities and

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<sup>4</sup> Second generation for the purposes of this study also includes 1.5 generation, this will be explained in detail later.

continue to maintain their ethno-national identity while asserting their ‘Canadian’ identity. This thesis attempts to accomplish this by asking the following questions:

1. How is Tamil Canadian identity constructed within popular discourses during this time period?
2. How do these popular constructions of Tamil Canadians conform and reproduce wider discourses on Canadian national identity and multiculturalism?
3. How do second generation Tamil Canadians (re)negotiate these identity constructions in constituting their identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework?

These questions will be explored by conducting a media analysis of editorials covering the demonstrations and ethnographic interviews. The media analysis will employ Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which allows for an understanding of popular discourses on diasporic and Canadian identities. CDA uses discourse analytic techniques with a critical stance to examine social issues such as identity. It provides a systematic way in which to analyze texts and the resultant discourses. The interviews will allow for a subjective understanding of how second generation Canadian Tamils negotiate these identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework.

This thesis essentially interrogates the role of popular discourses on diasporic identities and second generation Tamil-Canadian (re) negotiations of these constructions within a Canadian multiculturalism framework. I argue that the Canadian national identity as found in popular discourses is still confined to the nation-state and does not allow or acknowledge its diasporic nature. Therefore, normative understandings and policies informing Canadian national identity such as multiculturalism are also constrained by these static discourses. Multiculturalism thus becomes a means for eventual assimilation as opposed to actual two-way integration. For society to function its constituent parts need be linked, therefore integration becomes vital. Those that do not

find themselves reflected in this process feel alienated from society and therefore less attached. One-way integration does not respect minority group's integrity, values, beliefs, and ways of life. It ensures that power is concentrated by those that dictate the integration process. Multiculturalism therefore becomes a means in which to sustain the status-quo as opposed to ensuring a more equitable society. Therefore, I advocate a move towards adopting a multiculturalism informed by transnational political and cultural practices which accounts for the diasporic nature of Canadian society.

## 1.2. AIMS AND SIGNIFANCE

This thesis attempts to contribute to academic research in several ways. Firstly, it provides an empirical investigation on the SLT diaspora in Toronto. Despite the fact that there is a relatively large SLT presence there is a dearth of research concerning this population.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, it contributes to debates on Canadian national identity, citizenship, and multiculturalism with potential to inform policy. The study moves past looking just at state and official discourses to understand popular conceptualizations. Lastly, this thesis attempts to provide a case study for understanding multiculturalism as an experienced reality as opposed to simply an official policy.

## 1.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis attempts to analyze popular discourses on diasporic identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework in which multiculturalism has come to be understood as a defining feature of the Canadian national identity. By looking at how diasporic identities are situated in relation to the Canadian identity it is possible to understand how Canadian Tamils are incorporated into the Canadian multiculturalism framework. Providing the following overview of Canadian multiculturalism allows for a better understanding of the popular discourses which both inform multiculturalism and is

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<sup>5</sup> Few authors have written on the SLT diaspora in the Canadian context including Aiken & Cheran, 2005; Cheran, 2006; Drobny, McGorry, Miles, Silove, & Steel, 2002; La, 2004; Tyyska, Wayland, 2003; Vaitheespara, 1999.

constituted through multiculturalism. Second generation negotiation of these discourses will illustrate how multiculturalism is interpreted and contested.

Canada has always been polyethnic. Europeans of non-British and non-French made up segments of the early settlers. Black, Chinese, Irish, East Indian, and Jewish groups also made sizable settlements. Canada from its inception had a 'population problem'. It had to grow in order to defend its large space and its resources, which was required for developing a sense of nationhood and a competitive economy. This coupled with steady declining birth rates has meant immigration has always been a necessity for Canada to retain its standard of living (Berichewsky, 1994; Wilson, 1993, p. 652). Canada has and is still dependent on immigration. However, these groups from the onset were marginalized from the Canadian mainstream. From commencement Canada's Fathers of Confederation had claimed a 'new nationality'. George-Etienne Cartier proclaimed that Canada was a nation of 'deep racial diversity'. It was to be a heterogeneous society that would surpass differences of ethnic origins and religion. However, from the beginning this idealized vision of Canadian society was never fully realized.

Multiculturalism was never a goal of either Canada's national or immigration policies. Gilbert and Wood (2008) argue that by looking at the historical realities the government and citizens of Canada were actually attempting to combat Canadian multiculturalism and diversity. This is made evident by looking at just a few of Canada's unadmirable acts, including the Chinese head tax, anti-Asian riots, internment of the Japanese, Italians and Germans, the desolation of Aboriginal groups, turning away of Jews and blacks at the border (denial of entry still occurs in various forms today). Recent debates on what to do with the docking of a boat carrying Tamil refugees in British Columbia is demonstrative of the continuation of these practices. Canadian history is ridden with examples of a desire to create a white Canada. Multiculturalism was not a popular movement that the masses had mobilized towards achieving. This was most reflective in Canada's discriminatory immigration policies, which favoured immigrants from 'preferred' (read white) countries (Wilson, 1993, p. 651-652).

Until the end of WWII the main rationale for the integrative process of recent immigrant groups was Anglo-conformity, in which people were expected to assimilate to

British Canadian ways. The conclusion of the war brought the end of Britain's direct imperial pursuits and therefore Canada's identity at the time. No longer simply a dominion of Britain, Canada was in search for a new 'Canadian identity'. With influx of new refugees, coupled with Canada's need for immigrants to maintain the post-war boom, the Canadian landscape was changing. With new immigrants gaining political and social clout and in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the black civil-rights movement in the US blatant forms of racism was no longer acceptable. With this came changes to immigration policies and by 1967 the last element of overt racially discriminatory barriers were removed with a shift to the current point system.

With these demographic shifts and the wider social changes that accompanied them the historically accepted image of Canada as British and French fragments was no longer adequate. This representation was contested by those not falling within this category. It was largely due to these alternative discourses that the Canadian government adopted its policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework as recommended by the final report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. In 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau proclaimed that cultural pluralism was the very essence of the Canadian identity. Extending to every group the right to preserve and develop its cultural identity. There was to be two official languages and no official culture (Karim, 2008, p. 442; Johnson & Kobayashi, 2007, p. 10; Saloojee, 2003, p. 10). The first decade of the policy focused on cultural retention. As immigration was opened to non-Europeans, multiculturalism had to deal more with issues of racial discrimination (Karim, 2008, p. 443). The second phase of multiculturalism accorded the policy a protected place within the Canadian Constitution and readily began to inform national identity in a different capacity (Saloojee, 2003, p. 10). The Charter of Rights and Freedoms declared that it was to be interpreted in a manner that adhered to the 'preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada' (Troper, 1999). The policy was initially just a symbolic recognition of the demographic reality of Canada. However, as time went on it was criticized for lacking any real policy power. The policy then was changed from one that simply reproduced cultural traditions to one that focused on structural changes and legislations for equal opportunity and protection of groups. This came into law in 1988 under the official Multiculturalism Act. This revised Act included recognition and

development of cultural heritage and the legislative move towards advancing equality, political participation and institutional reform (Abu-Laban & Stasiulis, 1992, p. 367; Gilbert & Wood, 2005, p. 683). The Act took multiculturalism from a policy on celebratory diversity to one of Canadian nation building. However, the multiculturalism Act was and continues to be seen largely as symbolic, since it has no enforcement mechanisms like those for the official language legislation (Karim, 2008, p. 443).

Some argue that multiculturalism policies<sup>6</sup> did not emerge from demands from ethnic groups but rather was created to placate French-English conflicts (Wood & Gilbert, 2005, p. 688). The policy was a result of political manoeuvring on the part of Anglo-Canada's attempts at keeping Quebec 'in its place' (Burman, 2006, p. 102). It was not intended to become part of the Canadian national identity but it has come to influence politicians and citizens alike to view it as such. Some view the multiculturalism policy as being read into history, challenging the notion that this has always been a fundamental value of Canada. Troper (1999) argues that Canada and the USA are not as different when it comes to multiculturalism as commonly hypothesized. The distinction made between the Canadian 'mosaic' versus the American 'melting pot' in actuality does not exist in such a clear cut manner. The practices of accommodation in Canada are not unique to Canada. However, what is of interest is the extent to which this official policy has come to inform the Canadian national identity narrative. The greatest impact of the policy is in shaping public thinking about ethnic communities in Canadian society. Therefore, the multicultural nature of identity is not only reflective of a lived reality but one that is actively constructed and propagated as part of the Canadian national identity narrative. This is not to deny that the policy has allowed a legitimate space for people to advance issues of equity and social justice (Gilbert & Wood, 2005). Multiculturalism in Canada is not just a description of its diverse reality. It has come to be seen as a social ideal, a value that identifies Canadian pluralism as both a desirable aspect of society and one that needs to be preserved (Troper, 1999).

Despite the many different factors influencing Canadian national identity, multiculturalism remains to be one of the foremost identifiable characteristics of this

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<sup>6</sup> Multiculturalism policies in Canada consist more of than just the Act, for example employment equity policies can be included under multicultural policies. In recognition of this fact this thesis will refer to multiculturalism as a set of policies as opposed to simply the official act.



identity. Canada is the first modern state to implement an official multiculturalism policy (Johnson & Kobayashi, 2007, p. 3). In Canada multiculturalism is an official policy, practice, and ideology that plays a major role in constituting the national identity (Chanady, 1995, p. 421). In official state policy it is defined as ‘a fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity’ (Mackey, 2002, p. 2). Studies also reveal that beyond government ideologies popular imagination also conceptualizes Canadian national identity in terms of multiculturalism. A 2003 study found that 85 percent of Canadians said multiculturalism was an important constituent of Canadian identity (Adams & Langstaff, 2007, p. 20).

Multiculturalism is essentially a value statement. At its broadest level it is an attempt to promote tolerance, respect and recognition of different ethnic groups within a nation-state. It is based on the premise that each group is distinct and has a right to maintain cultural identities (Schuster & Solomos, 2001). It is about recognition of self and others (Wood & Gilbert, 2005, p. 685). A doctrine that provides a framework for the official advancement of social equality. It affords a policy that allows for the shaping, redefining, and managing of Canada’s diversity (Wilson, 1993, p. 654). The equality of citizens is a right that is extended to cultural groups. The Act is officially supposed to promote equal participation of individuals and groups of all origins in shaping Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of barriers to such participation. This thesis will look beyond state policies and focus on the normative understandings of multiculturalism in Canadian society. Popular understandings are an important site of analysis as they are formed by multiculturalism policies and inform these policies. Therefore, popular understandings have wider societal implications in terms of dictating policies and distributing resources.

The assertion of Canadian Tamil identity during the demonstrations illustrates a particular conceptualization of Canadian national identity and multiculturalism amongst the diaspora that deviates from those espoused by popular discourses. The argument that Canadian multiculturalism does not allow space for claiming diasporic identities is situated in four main criticisms of Canadian multiculturalism. First is the idea that multiculturalism creates and adheres to notions of ‘real Canadians’ versus ‘multiculture others’. Secondly, it is a policy and a discourse that does not (re) distribute power.

Thirdly, Canadian multiculturalism in its current manifestation does not alleviate intolerance but rather moves the discourse on discrimination based on race to ‘cultural appropriateness’. Lastly, there is a move from viewing multiculturalism based on social equity to one that propagates a ‘selling diversity’ model. These critiques speak to the inadequacies of the current conceptualisation of Canadian multiculturalism and its role in constituting Canadian Tamil identity and their understandings of citizenship and multiculturalism.

*‘Real Canadians’ versus the ‘Multiculture Other’*

One of the most common criticisms levied against the policies are its role creating and substantiating the idea of ‘real Canadians’ (majority or ‘core community’ who are perceived to be a cohesive nation) who decide on the terms of multiculturalism and how the multicultural ‘Other’ is to be tolerated. This essentialized ‘we’ is read colonial European turned into Canadian who is the subject or agent of Canadian nationalism (Bannerji, 2000, p. 42; Saul, 2005, p. 176; Lee & Lutz, 2005, p. 17). This speaks to larger discourses concerning notions of ‘Western civilization’. Canada perceives itself as sharing a linkage with Western nations in terms of political, military, economic, and cultural features which shapes its identity. This configuration or Arat-Koc (2005) argues reconfiguration of Canadian national identity after 9/11 has situated Canada internationally as an unconditional ally of the US in regards to foreign policies. The ‘War on Terror’ as propagated by the US has great implications for the discourses surrounding Canadian Tamils and the legitimacy of their identities. Discourses on terrorism and the profiling that accompanies it have wider ramifications for communities considered as having ‘illegitimate’ ties. Foremost, this reconfiguration leads to the (re)whitening of Canadian identity. Thereby, Canadians who do not feel connected to this ‘Western civilization’ feel alienated, diminishing their sense of political community and sense of being Canadian.

Bannerji (2000) argues that whiteness is implicitly part of the meaning of Canadian culture. This is evidenced by the fact that although Canada is seen as having two official languages and no official culture it does not include non-whites of the same language. So to be Canadian is read as being of European/North American origin and of

white skin. Those seen as outside this moral and cultural whiteness are seen as the 'Other'. This dominant white core culture retains its dominance by allowing limited forms of difference (Mackey, 2002, p. 152). There needs to be an interrogation of the culture of whiteness. If not, whiteness will continue to be naturalised and act as the cultural marker against which Otherness is measured and defined. McLaren (1994) argues that whiteness is everything and nothing. White culture is the power to define what is 'normal' (p.61).

In Canada multiculturalism policies are deemed only relevant for certain groups and is not extended to everyone or the 'mainstream' (Jansen, 2005, p. 22). Multiculturalism promotes conformity to a dominant culture in the public sphere and tolerates diverse cultures in the private sphere (Bun, 2004, p. 227). It focuses on those on the margins negating to look at the 'mainstream'. Kernerman (2005) argues that the mainstream is never on 'display' as the other cultures are or rather it is always on display but never as an identity category (p. 103). This has wider implications for issues of integration. Integration should ideally be a process in which members of different groups interact, learn new values and lifestyles and obtain new references and membership groups. However, in actuality integration has been unidirectional in which immigrant groups are expected to give up their values and adopt those of the host country (Elabor-Idemudia, 2005, p. 60). This speaks to wider issues of power, who dictates integration and how it is to be done.

### *Multiculturalism without Power*

Another criticism of the policies is that they do not seek to (re)distribute power. The Act and its policies have not been able to overcome the idea that Canada is a society of Western European heritage in which other groups are simply allowed to participate (Johnson & Kobayashi, 2007, p. 10). Multiculturalism is not intended to extricate power from the white majority (Saloojee, 2004, p. 420). The policies affirm cultural differences, while at the same time managing these groups through approved government avenues such as ethnic and immigrant organizations, cultural festivals, and 'heritage language' programs. However, this policy focuses only on culture without looking at issues of political representation and power (Cheran, 2006, p. 5). Bannerji (2003) argues that the

policies are not meant to overturn the structures of inequality but rather to contain and manage them so the state's legitimacy is not questioned. Multiculturalism from above is a method used for assigning subjectivities and conferring agency to these groups on non-structural or nonmaterial grounds. As a result, the state still maintains the right to define what qualifies as culture (Bannerji, 2000, p. 42; Bannerji, 2003, p. 36; Fleras & Elliott, 2002, p. 59; Henry, & Tator, p. 1999, 93; Jansen, 2005, p. 65). Multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda is just another way in which to accommodate the 'Other' into the dominant social order (Fleras & Elliott, 2002, p. 73; Goldberg, 1994, p. 53). Multiculturalism acts as both a tool for concealing and enshrining power relations by affording a naturalized discourse that even the 'Other' utilizes (Allahar, 1998, p. 341-342; Elabor-Idemudia, 2005, p. 65).

For Chanady (1995) Canadian multiculturalism is simply symbolic. Not only is this problematic because it does not extract power it actually labours against its intended goals and works to exclude people. Emphasis on cultural 'song and dance' activities delegitimizes the policy for minorities. By highlighting these attributes of these groups it symbolically excludes these groups from being seen as making valued political, economic, and social contributions to society (Bun, 2004, p. 59; Chanady, 1995, p. 427; Fleras & Elliott, p. 239). Allahar (1998) argues that Canadian multiculturalism and its form of accommodation is problematic because it does not attempt to reform traditional structures and institutions of domination. Rather, it nurtures parallel structures that are not able to compete with dominant institutions (p. 342).

Bannerji (2000) argues that multiculturalism from above emphasises ethnic identity which makes people compete against each other as opposed to developing a class identity. The multiculturalism paradigm for her speaks of difference in terms of ethnic cultures as opposed to structural and ideological reasons for differences. She states this shifts the conversation from one of exclusion and marginalization to one of ethnic identities and their lack of assimilation. According to Bannerji, during the period of the policy implementation there were no strong pressures from immigrants for the policy in the form it took. They were more concerned with issues of racism and legal discrimination concerning immigration and family reunification. The demands of the

immigrants she argues was not and still is not cultural. She feels that the policy reduces political issues into one of culture and translates culture into a private matter.

Instead of erasing differences completely and constructing an imagined community based on assimilation to one singular idea of culture, Canada has attempted to institutionalise these differences. As a result, controlling access to power and legitimizing the power of the state. The aim here is not to eradicate cultural differences but to manage them within a hierarchical scheme of cultures. These cultures are received as long as they are loyal to the Canadian nation building project which retains its authority and power through its ability to construct itself as neutral. The Canadian national identity is seen as devoid of a specific culture or ethnicity but rather seen as one based on universal ideas of rationality, progress, and equality (Mackey, 2002). These 'other' cultures are often portrayed in opposition to these ideas of rationality and progress, and therefore, inequality is justified. This speaks to the idea that there has been a move from racism based on race to one that declares cultures as incompatible.

#### *Multiculturalism: From Race to Culture*

Racism in Canada is no longer simply about race but rather cultural ethnocentrism that hides behind multiculturalism to legitimate its dominance. Justifications for exclusions which were based on race are now premised on ideas of culture. Culture has become racialised and no longer does the dominate culture consider itself racially superior but rather 'culturally appropriate' (Lee, J. & Lutz, J. 2005, p. 16). Fleras (2004) argues that there are three mutually reinforcing elements that account for this reality. Firstly, what she calls 'multicultural fundamentalism' in which cultures are understood in terms of their most basic and superficial characteristics. 'Multicultural fundamentalism' deems cultures as static and one-dimensional. Cultures are easily disregarded as culturally inappropriate due to the lack of a nuanced understanding of these cultures. A second factor is a Eurocentrism that normalizes anglocentricity as the norm for cultural coexistence. All cultures are measured against this norm and their value based on this measure. Those deemed as at odds with this 'norm' are regarded as incompatible. The last element of this cultural dynamic according to Fleras is a subliminal cultural racism that exerts its hegemony without it being acknowledged. The concealed nature of this

racism makes it harder to recognise and address. Ethnocentrism is not seen as being culturally superior but rather as the norm. This multicultural racism is able to exist because it is legitimated through the notion of 'monocultural' multiculturalism. This is a form of multiculturalism that privileges 'consensus over challenge, conformity over dissensus, containment over empowerment, control over change, universality over particular, and uniformity over diversity'. Under this idea of 'monoculture' people are allowed to be different as long as it is in the same manner. Differences are tolerated as long as they do not violate laws or challenge values and institutions (Fleras, 2004; Fleras & Elliott, 2002). However, there are certain power relations at play in terms of who decides who can challenge the laws, institutions, and customs. The demonstrations illustrated that the privilege to challenge is not fully bestowed to the Canadian Tamil community. Multiculturalism allows Canadians to believe that racism is not a Canadian issue, since racial harmony is a presumed component of multiculturalism. Therefore, this uncritical acceptance of multiculturalism ignores how the policies actually operate (Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 6). This uncritical acceptance also allows multiculturalism to be directed towards goals other than equity and inclusiveness. One such goal has been to sell Canadian diversity as opposed to better incorporate Canadian diversity.

### *Selling Multiculturalism*

There has been a recent (re) focus of multiculturalism as simply a means for incurring capitalist gains. Abu-Laban & Gabriel (2002) argue that recent versions of multiculturalism promote a 'selling diversity' model in which diversity is seen as something only to be used to advance Canada's competitive role in the global market. Easily consumed and packaged versions of culture have been utilized to market and strengthen Canada in the global economy. Multiculturalism policies have taken on a globalization discourse that connects diversity with business and international trade links. However, a multiculturalism that focuses on business and trade neglects to deal with issues of class and gender inequalities amongst ethnic minorities. This form of multiculturalism provides a very limited understanding that focuses on national and global competitiveness as opposed to national inclusion and belonging. There is a sense that Canadian multiculturalism in its role as a defining component of Canadian national

identity creates and informs the dichotomization of ‘real Canadians’ and ‘multiculture Others’, in this case the ‘diasporic other’. Multiculturalism allows Canadian Tamils a space in which to demonstrate but when they ask to reformulate foreign policies they are limited. Their values are seen as incompatible with ‘Canadian culture’. The reformulation of multiculturalism to one that values its citizen in terms of their economic potential marginalizes groups that are seen as asking more from the state than contributing. Tamil Canadians are viewed as more of a burden than an asset to the Canadian state. These critiques illustrate the ways in which diasporic identities are marginalized because of the inadequacies of current manifestations of multiculturalism.

Diasporas because of their transnational nature is a useful lens in which to address the limitations of multiculturalism for 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. As diasporic claims become an increasing actuality how these claims are incorporated has a bearing on the make-up of society. Therefore, popular discourses and state policies such as multiculturalism need to account for such changing conditions. Diasporic identities exert a hybridity that is often at odds with the nationally bounded Canadian identity. The following will provide a brief overview of the term diaspora. This will lead to a discussion on the unique form of identity construction that occurs within the diaspora and the need for Canadian multiculturalism to recognize such identities.

#### 1. 4. DIASPORA

The term diaspora and what it entails is heavily contested. This paper will use the term in its broadest sense as a social-political formation created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration whose members regard themselves as belonging to a similar origin. It is a social collectivity that exists across borders and sustains a collective identity through internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland. It also displays an ability to address collective interests of members through developed internal organization and transnational links (Adamson & Denetricu, 2007, p. 497; Anand, 2003, p. 216-217; Charusheela, 2007, p.280; Kleist, 2008, p. 1134; Mavroudi, 2008, p. 59; Sheffer, 2003, p. 9, 26). According to Friedman, diaspora is essentially the ethnification of transnational connections. Communications, social relations, and economics become structured and institutionalized across borders as opposed to

immigrant groups becoming a separate minority group within the 'host'. The diaspora is unlike any other processes of fragmentation in the sense that it organizes itself in global terms, it is both subnational and transnational (Friedman, 1998, p. 244). Transnational economic, social, and political relations have helped create migrant networks and communities in which categories such as 'migrants' and 'refugees' are not adequate for the realities of movement and settlement. For Schuster and Solomos (2001) the word diaspora is better able to capture this reality than simply immigration and assimilation (p. 4-5).

Kleist (2008) suggests that the concept of diaspora should not be seen simply as a category that tells us something about a population but the analytical optic of diaspora should be viewed as something that tells us about the *claims* and *identifications* made by certain groups who identify or are identified as a diaspora (p. 1130). Instead of viewing transnational communities as simply existing because of displacements, claims of diaspora should be seen as a result of political aspirations and identifications in order to mobilize and link people to certain histories of displacement, suffering, and community (Kleist, 2008, p. 1130). Thereby, diasporic subjectivity is not something out there to be discovered but one that is actively constructed and claimed (Kleist, 2008, p.1130; Turner, 2008, p. 747).

This sense of diasporic claim does not necessarily have to be based on any 'direct connection'. Tremon (2009) in her study of the Chinese population in French Polynesia looks at the role of wider historical and global processes that shape diasporic subjectivity. Changing global processes allow for reconnections and reidentification with a homeland amongst groups that did not feel or articulate this connection before (p. 104).

Fouron and Glick Schiller provide a reconceptualization of diaspora as transnational social fields in which these populations should be understood as being part of more than one society. They are simultaneously invested socially, economically, and politically in more than one space (Fouron and Glick Schiller, 2001, p. 172; Mavroudi, 2008, p. 59). Therefore, assumptions about social institutions, family, citizenship and nation-states need to be re-examined within this transnational social field context (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1003). Espiritu and Tran (2001) add to this conceptualization by advocating that the term diaspora should go beyond actual transnational activities (that



is home visits, kinship ties, remittances, etc) to include ‘imagined’ returns to homelands (through selective memory, cultural rediscovery, sentimental longings). Therefore, transnationalism is experienced at both a literal and a symbolic level. This idea of transnationalism on a symbolic level is most prevalent amongst second generation members as many have never been ‘home’ (p. 369).

Diasporas are becoming an increasing reality of nation-states in comparison to previous generations where links to ‘homelands’ were often thought to diminish with subsequent generations. The need for recognition of these claims, therefore, takes on a greater urgency. Focusing on identity speaks to larger issues of recognition which is the underlying rationale of multiculturalism. Studying diasporic identity is important for several reasons. Identity is not simply meanings attached to the self. It is a framework in which to understand a system of values, practices and meanings that are associated with the self. To recognize identity is to recognize ways of being and belonging.

Recognition is also a vital factor of inclusive citizenship. According to Ong (1996) citizenship is the dual process in which the self is made within relations of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. It is dialectically constructed by the state and its subjects. Social or cultural citizenship accounts for how immigrants function within institutional constraints placed on them by the state and civil society as well as the ways in which these immigrants claim these spaces and rights.

Citizenship is usually conceptualized within the nation-state framework. However, there is a move towards expanding this idea to include transnational citizenship, with several countries recognizing the need and legitimacy of things like dual citizenship. In times of increased mobility citizenship that is tied to the nation state is increasingly questioned. Ong (2005) argues that there is a rearticulation of the citizen in which some individuals get to claim rights of citizenship while others only get to make limited claims. Citizenship to her becomes tied up with the market, administrative policies, and humanitarian interventions. Globalizing forces produce conditions for claiming political rights on grounds other than legal notions of citizenship (p. 697). Citizenship is no longer to be seen as connected to ‘conventional geography’. Instead of the territory of the nation state the ‘space of assemblage’ is the new site of political claim making. She calls this idea flexible citizenship in which mobile individuals take

advantage of the fluidity of borderless market conditions (Ong, 2006, p. 501). However, recognition of these claims to citizenship is differentiated along lines of class, gender, race, and sexuality. Some 'mobile' identities are recognized more readily than others which this thesis will demonstrate.

Lack of recognition and discrimination weakens citizenship and individual's ability to develop their full potentials (Saloojee, 2003, p. 9). According to Berdichewsky (1994) to be a good citizen one must be confident in one's identity and have the recognition of one's identity by others. One invests where one sees oneself (p. 287; Ibrahim, 2004). For Charles Taylor (1994) identity is shaped through a dialogical relationship with others, which is either by recognition or misrecognition. We are constituted partly by public recognition of our identities and social groups. Misrecognition by others can lead persons or groups to experience a sense of distortion. This distortion inflicts harm and can be seen as a form of oppression in which persons are reduced in their sense of being. Recognition, therefore, is a crucial human need. People expect to see themselves in expressions of collective identity. They expect to see some correlations between their own identities, ideas, and beliefs reflected in societal institutions in order to feel that they belong (Breton, 1999, p. 296). It is, therefore, imperative to garner a better understanding of groups who feel their identities are not recognized within Canadian society in attempts to overcome feelings of misrecognition and distortion for wider goals of social justice.

Recognition of identity is the defining tenet of multiculturalism. Focusing on diasporic identity allows for establishing an argument for the recognition of an identity that incorporates transnational political and cultural practices. Drawing on this idea of transnational social field I argue that citizenship and the wider project of nation-building for Canada needs to be reconceptualised in a manner where Canadian identities should not be viewed as being solely created within the confines of its borders. The Canadian identity is fluid and is constantly being constructed therefore it is able to and must incorporate these various forms of identities. The Canadian national identity needs to take into account the diasporic nature of its population.

It is important to acknowledge the unique form of identity construction that exists within diasporic communities. The concept of diasporic subjectivity situates analysis of

subject formation and social experience within a transnational context (Charusheela, 2007). This identity is shaped by the need to negotiate differences, multiple identities and lifestyles within a specific community. The difference that is negotiated is both affirming and antagonistic. Individuals both appropriate and resist identities imposed on them. Identity formation does not occur in isolation but rather is mediated through multiple structures of power. Marginalized identities therefore are created in reaction to racism, eurocentrism, and exclusion on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and class (Yon, 1995).

Kenneth Wald's (2008) empirical study reveals that groups that are forced to leave are more likely to develop politicized ethnic identities (p. 277). Literature also demonstrates that during periods of change in the 'homeland' groups in the diaspora revive identification with the diaspora and the 'homeland' (Sheffer, 2003). In this thesis I argue that change in the 'homeland' also revives identification with the 'host' society. Longitudinal studies reveal that during moments of crisis or opportunity for those embedded in a transnational social field even those that never identified or participated in transnational activities can be mobilized into action (Jones-Correa, 2001; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). As I shall illustrate later, this was demonstrated by the second generation's mass mobilization towards 'home' relief efforts.

Stuart Hall (1998) argues that since diasporic identities are not confined to the nation-state they are inherently hybrid. These hybrid identities are result of displacement and transnational experiences and are shaped by both the 'host' and 'home' countries. Gilroy's (1993) work on the Black diaspora confirms this idea of double consciousness in which he looks at Blacks in the UK trying to be both 'European' and 'Black' through their relationship to their 'homeland'.

Although diasporic identity is hybrid it needs to be problematized. Hybridity needs to be understood in its more comprehensive form or move past what Radhakrishnan (2003) calls 'metropolitan' versions of hybridity. 'Metropolitan' versions of hybridization does not account for power relations that inform hybridity. Hybridization is simply understood as two cultures coming together and intermingling. This idea of hybridization is deemed as not threatening and fits within dominant discourses of national and transnational citizenship (p. 314). However, when conceptualizing hybridity there

must be an acknowledgement that hybridization is not a process amongst cultures that are valued equally. Power relations need to be recognized, what is hybrid, who is considered a hybrid, who is not, who has the power to define it as such all need to be considered. To overlook this would be to allow hybridity to be used as a tool of the powerful in which questions of politics and histories of inequality and legacies of colonialism are overlooked (Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005, p. 101).

The very idea of 'host' and 'home' culture assumes non-hybridity. When hybridity is accepted it is still looked at as a fixed identity, for example the Canadian Tamil identity is understood as a homogenous identity, neglecting internal divergences within groups. Hybridity becomes a new way of essentializing identities. The host is normalized, and it is never acknowledged that the host too is a hybrid. The idea of the host is a property claim, a claim to ownership, a claim to authority. The right to claim 'purity'. The host deems themselves not as a hybrid. The idea of the host as not hybrid takes its most abhorrent form in terms of white supremacy and nationalist chauvinism (Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005). According to Radhakrishnan hybridity needs to be understood as a laborious process in which one understands themselves and on the basis of that understanding produce their own version of hybridity and find political legitimacy for that version (2003, p. 314). It is this form of hybridity that I argue Canadian Tamils attempted to articulate and legitimize during the demonstrations.

Hall looking at the Black diaspora argues that it is only by looking at how Blacks are positioned and subjected in the regimes of representation is it possible to see that these identities are a result of exercise of cultural power and normalization. Not only do dominant regimes of representation have the power to construct the marginalized as the 'Other' but they also possess the power to make the marginalized see themselves as the 'Other' (Hall 1998, p. 225). Drawing on this, Canadian Tamil diasporic identity construction will be explored by looking at popular discourses within 'regimes of representations' in informing their identities.

Kathleen Hall (2002) drawing on works by Stuart Hall provides a theoretical framework for understanding identity. She argues that identity is relational and produced through many forms of discourses in relation to power. Individuals are produced at a nexus of subjectivities, in connection to power relations which are always changing,

leaving them powerful at times and powerless at other times. Therefore, power is always partial leaving space for negotiating many different identities. The discursive production of the self is always fragmented because there are many discourses that each individual is subject to (Hall, 2002; Ngo, 2008, p. 6). According to Kathleen Hall individuals negotiate power and meaning through ‘acts of translation’. These acts come from a ‘third space’ in which individuals can look at and reflect on different cultural influences and forms of oppression and opportunities. It is within this space they are able to construct hybrid lifestyles. Subjects are constructed within discourse but also through negotiation and situated performances actively constructing themselves (Hall, 2002, p. 16; Ngo, 2009, p. 204). Essentially, this thesis will be based on the understanding that identity is formed through discourse, representation, and power (Dlamini & Anucha, 2009; Ibrahim, 2004, p. 279; McDowell, 2008; Sundar, 2008). Discourse constructs social reality and social reality is made up of power relationships expressed through discourse (Ward & Winstanley, 2003, p. 1261). The focus of this thesis will be on popular discourses on diasporic identity within a Canadian multiculturalism framework.

### 1.5. SLT DIASPORIC CONTEXT: TAMILS IN TORONTO

The SLT diaspora is largely a result of the civil conflict. Sri Lanka received Independence from Britain in 1948. This was followed by a Sinhalese/Buddhist nationalist movement in response to years of suppression by colonial rule. Policies that were undertaken in attempts to assert Sinhalese nationalism undermined the conditions of the Tamil minority who were perceived to have benefited from British rule. Anti-Tamil violence during this post-Independence period was common. However, the 1983 pogrom which was at the time the most severe, (killing 3, 000 Tamil civilians) is attributed as the defining start of the full scale militant conflict between Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan government. After years of non-violent mobilization the movement for self-determination took a violent turn, leaving the LTTE as the only real ‘Tamil’ militant threat to the state. Sinhalese political nationalism had essentially given rise to a resistive form of Tamil nationalism. Violence escalated between the government and the liberation movements as well as between Tamil factions. This resulted in massive dislocation of the SLT population and a mass exodus to other parts of Sri Lanka, India,

Europe, Australia, and North America. It is in this context that the SLT diaspora was formed. Currently it is estimated at being 700,000 which is remarkable considering that the total SLT population in Sri Lanka is about 3.5 million (Sriskandarajah, 2005, p. 493).

The SLT population in Canada was relatively low in the early 1980s, totalling about 2,000. However, with the onset of the war in 1983 and the extension of the Canadian government's refugee status policy, there was a marked increase in the population of SLT in Canada (Vaitheespara, 1999). From 1990 to 1999 individuals from Sri Lanka made up the largest category of people applying for asylum in Canada (34,186 applications). Almost a third of these applications were made within the first year (Sriskandarajah, 2005, p. 494). Although many came as refugees (and continue to do so) others also came later through family reunification programs. The post-1983 migrants were not just English-educated middle classes like those that had arrived earlier but represented a wider cross section of the population (Vaitheespara, 1999). The post-1983 immigrants were different in several respects compared to those that had arrived earlier in Canada. For one they arrived at a time when the Canadian economy was recovering from a downturn and unlike earlier Tamil immigrants they did not come with professional qualifications or English fluency. The education curriculum had changed in Sri Lanka after Independence and more emphasis was given to native languages as opposed to English. Education was also often interrupted due to the civil conflict. Vaitheespara (1999) also argues that the post-1983 immigrants were different in the sense that they were infused with a stronger sense of Tamil nationalism and came with a sense of community. In line with Wald's (2008) empirical study that those forced to leave are more likely to develop a politicized identity. In Canada they were able to reproduce those networks.

The SLT diaspora in Canada is estimated to be at 200,000 (Cheran, 2007, p. 160). However, there are discrepancies concerning this estimate. Canadian census data for 2006 state that the total number of Tamil speakers in Canada make up 138,675 of the population (this of course includes those not part of the SLT diaspora who speak Tamil) (Statistics Canada, 2006). Community estimates put the number as high as 300,000 (Canadian Tamil Congress, 2009). The SLT diaspora have well established social, cultural, and economic networks that provide the community a wealth of social capital

(Aiken & Cheran, 2005, p. 10). The SLT diaspora in Canada has been able to establish great networks in the relatively short time they have been here. There are more than two dozen community newspapers, radio stations (such as Canadian Multicultural Radio), TV stations (such as Tamil Vision Incorporated), many Tamil business directories all indicative of the diaspora's established networks. There are about 300 Tamil Home Village Associations and Alumni Associations in Canada (Cheran, p. 287). These organizations provide social, psychological, economic, and cultural capital. They create both a sense of diasporic solidarity in Canada as well as help relief efforts in Sri Lanka. This exemplifies the transnational social field in which the SLT diaspora claims and situates itself within. These examples illustrate how they are simultaneously invested in more than one national space (Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001). In addition to these features, scholars such as Zunzer (2004) argue that due to the political status of the Tamil community in Canada and the internal social and political group differentiation it is possibly the most advanced SLT diaspora community worldwide (p. 22). The SLT diaspora is quite different in Canada than in other locations and this is attributed largely to the status of its members here. The power of this community depends on its citizenship rights and the form of incorporation into Canadian society (Cheran, 2007, p.160). In Canada the form of incorporation depends very much on its multiculturalism policies. The opportunities and limitations that these communities and identities face depend on the ability of multiculturalism policies to ensure tolerance, respect, and recognition.

There are many complexities and intersections of power in which diasporic identity is constituted. It is by no means to argue that diasporic identity itself is a comprehensive identity without internal differences. Glick Schiller (2006) states that the term diaspora has a tendency to naturalize identity and the differences in power within this homogenously imagined community. Within the diaspora many divergences exist and it should not be taken as an all encompassing term, but rather a concept that incorporates a large collection of individuals that do claim to share connections to a 'homeland'. One such variance is the experience of the second generation. For the purpose of this thesis there is a special interest in narrowing the focus to the second generation.

### 1.6. WHY THE SECOND GENERATION?

Since for the most part the SLT diaspora is a result of the mass exodus following the commencing of the war in the 80s, the second generation members in Canada are for the most part entering their early adult years. This segment of the population provides an interesting point of study since for the most part they comprise a similar cohort entering these stages at the same time. The SLT second generation unlike their first generation counterpart have grown up within this multiculturalism framework and have been indoctrinated with its tenets. They experience and construct identities that are a result of both growing up within this framework and realizing its shortcomings. Research has found that second generation diasporic subjectivity is quite different from that of the first generation. Studies reveal that second generation members experience different forms of alienation and discrimination compared to their parents (Eckstein, 2001; Rajiva, 2006; Zhou, 2001). According to Rajiva (2006), first generation members when made to feel othered look back nostalgically to a home where they felt they belonged, they can escape to this place if only imaginatively. However, second generation members who have grown up in this 'Othering space' have no place to return, they are made to feel they belong neither here nor there (p. 179). Marginalization is often heightened amongst the second generation who feel that they have adopted 'host' identities and values but the 'host' country continues to discriminate (Zhou, 2001, p. 205).

According to Isajiw (1999) each generation creates its own form of ethnic identity. Thus ethnic identity is not simply the maintenance of the identity formed by the first generation but one that is uniquely constructed by each generation. This is a continuous process that has much to do with everyday survival (p. 33). Rajiva (2006) argues that the second-generation locates their struggles of becoming racialized mostly in their youth. If subjectivity is a process of 'becoming' due to intersections of power there needs to be an exploration of how lives 'acquire race' over time. Looking at time or age will provide a better picture of the role of the nation in creating racialized subjects (p. 181).

Portes (2003) argues that for today's second generation there are those that ethnicity is a matter of choice and for those that it is not. There are those that ethnicity is a source of benefit in terms of availability of networks and resources and there are those



whom their ethnicity deems them as subordinate. Although Portes differentiates between those who have a choice in asserting their ethnic identity and those that it will be imposed on, he fails to look at how this ethnic identity is strategically employed by the second generation. Sundar (2008) looks at the strategic use of 'ethnicity' amongst South Asian youth. In what she calls 'Browning it up' or 'Bringing down the Brown' she argues that second generation youth are able to emphasize 'South Asian' characteristics and behaviours or characteristics considered 'Canadian' in ways that help them acquire material/economic goals (e.g. accessing resources employment) and emotional/psychological goals (e.g. sense of belonging) (p. 265; Hall, 2002, p. 171). Therefore, although ethnic identity will often be imposed onto these groups they also have a degree of agency in determining how they navigate their identities. The most important rationale for focusing on the second generation is simply due to the sheer number in which they came out to participate and the leadership roles they took on. This illustrates the long-term implications of diasporas and the need for their recognition for future generations. Diasporic activity does not necessarily lessen with subsequent generations. Diasporic claims are becoming a long-term reality for Canadian society and therefore need to be adequately addressed. It must be acknowledged that I do realize the term second generation is problematic as an analytical category. It too has a propensity for homogenizing identity. The second generation experience too differs along distinctions of class, caste, gender, ability, and sexuality.

The political demonstrations were illustrative of active diasporic identity claim making by the Canadian Tamil community who are situated within a transnational social field. This makes them an ideal case study in which to explore the research questions at hand. The prominent role that multiculturalism plays in shaping Canadian national identity makes it an important framework in which the following thesis is situated in. It is within this context that popular constructions of Canadian Tamil identity are constituted. I argue that Canadian Tamils' conceptualization of Canadian citizenship does not reflect popular conceptualization of citizenship as found within the current multiculturalism framework. The disconnect between the constructions demonstrate a need for a more nuanced understanding of Canadian multiculturalism and citizenship which incorporates the idea of transnational political and cultural practices. Focus on second generation

narratives of identities and popular understandings of these identities are explored utilizing a media analysis as well as ethnographic interviews. Popular constructs of diasporic identities is examined through the use of media analysis. For Fairclough (2003) texts are ideological representations and have ideological effects. Discourse analysis allows for a better understanding of these media texts in terms of their effects on power relations (p. 9). How these constructs are renegotiated by diaspora members themselves is best accomplished by garnering a subjective interpretation of these constructs through in-depth interviews. The following chapter will outline the methodological framework for this thesis.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

*Second generation chant leader: What do we want?*

*Crowd: Government ceasefire*

*Second generation chant leader: When do we want it?*

*Crowd: Right now.*

*Chants echoed across the city for months. They had become an almost permanent staple of the Toronto cityscape as demonstrators mainly from the Tamil community reached out for help. This particular demonstration, one of the larger ones began on a rainy Saturday morning. It was one of many before it and many followed it. In front of the USA Consulate the demonstrators all stood in unison, or what was at least perceived as unison. Despite internal differences one thing was clear, something had to be done and the world needed to help. Some had been propelled to come out because of their own political beliefs. For some the demonstrations were the only outlet available in which they could cope with their emotions. For others it was their last desperate resort. There they stood in a fenced off area in front of the consulate, hoping that anyone whether inside or out would hear their plea. Flags dotted the crowd, American flags, Canadian flags, Quebec flags, Black flags, 'Tamil Eelam ' or 'LTTE ' flags, expressive of both the global reach of these problems and the many discourses simultaneously at play.*

*Second generation chant leader: Canada take*

*Crowd: Immediate action*

*Second generation chant leader: UN take*

*Crowd: Immediate action*

*In the middle of all this, there I was with my notepad, it signifying my status as both an 'insider' and 'outsider'. I, as a second generation SLT also shared their sense of desperation and need to vocalize their fears and concerns. By this point I had been to several demonstrations. At some they looked at me from an immediate distance, wary of what I was doing. At others they approached me directly asking what I was doing, who I was supporting, indicative of how suspicious they had become of 'outside' interpretations of the demonstrations. I usually attended these demonstrations on my own. On one occasion I went with my mother, who despite self-identifying as apolitical and not particular involved in direct 'homeland' activities felt compelled to come out and support not only those in Sri Lanka but the thousands in the diaspora demonstrating. These demonstrations and the events in Sri Lanka had touched and moved parts of the diaspora that had almost forgotten their connection to their 'homeland'.*

*Second generation chant leader: Stop using*

*Crowd: Chemical weapons*

*Second generation chant leader: Stop killing*

*Crowd: Innocent Tamils*

*Many non-demonstrators wondered what good, if any, the blocking of major roads on a Saturday in front of a consulate of another country would bring. However, Tamil Canadians had moved past the simple understanding of the nation in its territorially bounded trope. They themselves direct product of transnationality understood the changing global configuration and recognized the power that these demonstrations, wherever they were held, potentially had. Whether it was their direct voices or the sound bites that would be heard world over, they knew the word would get where it needed to be--out. The USA, a strategic player on the world stage on its own as well as a member of the United Nations Security Council was perceived to be an important player in the Sri Lankan conflict. Whatever the case may be, one thing was for sure, these demonstrations at their very least had brought attention to an otherwise quiet and often neglected community in Toronto.*

*Second generation chant leader: Stop the  
Crowd: Genocide*

*Second generation chant leader: Recognize  
Crowd: Tamil Eelam*

*Second generation chant leader: Who bombed the safe zone?  
Crowd: Sri Lanka bombed the safe zone*

*When asked how many demonstrators were present a young second generation female in the crowd answered that she estimated it to be between at least 10,000-12,000 people. I asked a police officer on duty after explaining my purpose at the demonstration and he firmly asserted that there were between 3,000- 4,000 people present. One thing was clear this was a mobilization of people on a grand scale, unlike anything the city had seen in recent times. Second generation members came out in large numbers, playing active roles in the demonstrations. Some draped in 'LTTE ' shirts, scarves, buttons, others adorned in 'Tamil Eelam' bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. Expressions of identity were in abundance, literally worn. The crowd was made up of mainly Tamils but there were others that stood in solidarity. People from other communities had ventured out in the rain to show support. Student groups, unions, anti-war groups, had all come out to stand in support. The demonstrations were representative of a cross-section of the community. Everyone was there, ranging from the very young to the elderly. Men, women, children, youth, seniors had all come out. This was a cause that had affected everyone.*

*Second generation chant leader: President Obama  
Crowd: Save the Tamils*

*Second generation chant leader: LTTE  
Crowd: Freedom fighters*

*Second generation chant leader: Media, media*

*Crowd: Open your eyes*

*It was a peaceful demonstration, like most of them, minus a few isolated incidents. To ensure that peace remained there were dozens and dozens of uniformed officers in special riot gear. The demonstrations began at the USA consulate and slowly began moving across the city to the Ontario Legislature at Queen's Park. On the way the demonstrators had done one thing for sure, garnered the city's attention. Passers-by honked in support of the demonstrators. Some honked in frustration. Some drove by and took pictures. Some stopped and took pictures. Some came out of shops and offices to look. Some stayed in and looked from the windows. Some people on the street showed support and some looked indifferent.*

*Second generation chant leader: Our leader*

*Crowd: Prabhakaran*

*Second generation chant leader: Sri Lankan government*

*Crowd: Terrorist government*

*Second generation chant leader: Sri Lanka's president*

*Crowd: War criminal*

*As the demonstration moved along a truck went by with two white middle aged males who loudly screamed to the demonstrators, 'go home'!*

*(Saturday, May 9, 2009. Toronto, Ontario, USA consulate—Queen's Park)*

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The second generation are entering an important point in their lives. Unlike older refugee populations, the Tamil Canadian second generation is fairly young. Since most out migration started in 1983 the diaspora's second generation are just entering their adult years. These young adults are positioned in an interesting nexus, articulating their identities between their 'Canadianness' and 'Tamilness' and mobilizing politically along these identities.

My proposal to explore identity amongst second generation members of the Tamil diaspora as dialectically constructed through popular discourses on Canadian and Tamil identity requires examining key texts that propagate these discourses. Moreover, the conceptualization of identity as being constituted through representation, power, and discourse will guide the following analysis of how Canadian-Tamil identity is constructed, represented, and negotiated in popular discourse. Drawing on Kathleen Hall (2002) who argues that it is within different forms of cultural production such as the media in the public sphere that identities are constructed. The media provides an opportunity for 'multicultural' dialogues about difference and these are central to identity formation. These portrayals show Canadian Tamils how they are perceived and allow them to interpret these depictions in their identity construction. The media both rigidifies identity through processes of objectification and simultaneously allows for reflection and dialogue by these second generation members. Since media discourse allows for this interpretation it causes those viewed as 'others' to substantiate their ethnic identity. Interviews allow for a subjective interpretation of how these identities are both constituted and negotiated through these discourses. It will also illustrate how these identities create and continue to reproduce these discourses.

Popular discourse will be analyzed by looking at newspaper editorials, opinion sections and letters to the editor. I opted to focus on editorials as it reflects the most dominant opinions of the newspapers and often its readers. It also indicates who has the privilege of space in which to articulate discourse. Letters to the editor are more representative of the 'public'. Permitting reader's to write in their opinions allows for a broader reflection of popular discourses on Canadian and Tamil identity. This allows for different dimensions of public discourse to be analysed. However, it should be noted

which letters are chosen and in what context they are situated is also premised on notions of privilege and power. The theoretical rationale for choosing to focus on newsprint lies in Habermas' (1989) conceptualization of the public space as a space in which popular discourse is created as well as propagated.

For Habermas the public sphere is a space in which private individuals assemble to form a public body and discuss 'public' issues. These discussions in the public space contribute to the development of public opinion. In a large body this is done chiefly through newspapers, magazines, radio, TV which are all medias of the public space (Habermas, 1989, p. 136). This of course is not an ideal space in which everyone can express their opinions equally. It must be acknowledged that newspapers carry privileged voices. Therefore, although examining newspaper articles does not provide an analysis of all public opinions, because of the place it has in the public space it can be considered a good method in which to analyze the most prominent opinions in society (Karim, 2008, p. 58).

The idea of the public space in this thesis relates not only to the newspapers in which popular opinions are expressed but also the physical spaces of the demonstrations themselves. Public spaces are places where people meet. As illustrated in the ethnographic account of a demonstration in the introduction of this chapter, public spaces provide a space for recognition, participation and citizenship in which difference is negotiated, affirmed or contested (Amin, 2002, p. 967; Gilbert & Wood, 2005, p. 685). This provides the rationale for looking at demonstrations as an important site in which to understand the negotiation of citizenship. The negotiation of citizenship will be analyzed by undertaking a media analysis and in-depth interviews. The media analysis will allow for examining hegemonic views on citizenship and the interviews will allow an investigation of individual negotiations of these conceptualizations.

## 2.2. MEDIA ANALYSIS (CDA)

The analysis of popular discourses found in these editorials will be undertaken by employing Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA). Since I will be looking at identity as formed through power, discourse, and representation, it is appropriate to see how discourses on identity are represented within popular discourse. Although discourse

is inaccessible in its totality, it can be explored by looking at texts that constitute it (in this case news editorial) (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004, p. 239). For Fairclough texts have causal effects on knowledge beliefs, attitudes, values, and identities (2003, p. 8).

Language is a vital aspect of social life, dialectically interconnected with other facets of life. Fairclough puts forward a discourse analysis in which it is understood that social life and practices are both discursively produced and produce social practices that shape discourse. Therefore, social analysis should take into consideration the importance of language (2003, p. 2).

In terms of identity, language constitutes it as opposed to simply reflecting it (Weedon, 2004, p. 17). Ainsworth and Handy (2004) argue that processes of discursive construction influence and restrict identities, which affect social practice. People draw on broader discourses in forming their identities. These discourses delineate what is considered 'sensible' which then demarcates what is considered 'appropriate' behaviours and social practices (p.245).

CDA holds that discursive practices are not neutral, rather they contribute to the production and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups. It aims to expose the means by which language is used to maintain power (Baker, Gabrielatos, Krzyzanowski, Mcenery, & Wodak, 2008, p. 280; Jackson, 2005, p. 24-25; Henry & Tator, 2000, p. 19). Analysis of language and text can help deconstruct dominant ideologies and help identify social, economic, and historical power relations between dominant and subordinate groups (Henry & Tator, 2000, p. 18). CDA is both a theory and a method that begins from the premise that research should focus on a social problem and produce knowledge that leads to 'emancipatory change'. With that in mind the current social problem or research question that will be explored is how popular constructions of Tamil Canadian diasporic identity is 'othered' within the broader context of Canadian nationalism. Focusing on texts allow for an analysis of discourse, however, how these discourses are interpreted and negotiated calls for a need beyond such analysis. Interviews allow for a space in which to analyze how discourses are subjectively negotiated.

### Data Sample



The editorials used for this analysis came from newspapers published between January 2009 and June 2009 and were accessed using the Canadian Newsstand database. I looked at three major newspapers in Toronto, Toronto Star, National Post, and The Globe and Mail. The search term used was 'Tamil'. In total there were 77 editorials mentioning the demonstrations. From this I narrowed down the sample size to 20 due to time constraints. I divided the sample into 2 sets of 10, ten articles in total from the Toronto Star and 6 articles from the National Post and 4 articles from The Globe and Mail. I decided to look at the National Post and The Globe and Mail together as they to a greater extent share similar ideological space. In order to minimize bias in article selection, I employed a systematic random sampling technique. I wanted to ensure the selection was representative of the chosen time span and a random sampling would not have accounted for this. Employing this method allowed taking into consideration how discourses changed if at all as the demonstrations went on. Systematic random sampling involved selecting every  $n$ th unit from the sampling frame.  $N$  was established by dividing the sample frame size by the sample size, in this case that was  $77/20$ . This resulted in 3.85, it was rounded down, making  $n=3$ . Three was also the randomly selected starting point. Every third article was chosen from this starting point, allowing each unit an equal chance of being selected (Fico, Lacy, & Riffe, 2005, p. 107).

### 2.3. INTERVIEWS

#### Data Sample

I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with second generation Tamil Canadians. I defined second generation as anyone born to SLT parents who were either born in Canada or came to Canada before 13 years of age (1.5 generation). I choose 13 years of age as this is the time before they enter high school and arguably before they really begin to question their identity. Many Tamil Canadians did not come directly to Canada, living in many 'stop over' countries before their arrival. As such many of these individuals were not born in Canada or Sri Lanka. They are born within this wider diasporic transnational social field and as such for the purposes of this study are all included under the overarching designation of second generation. I interviewed 10 (5 females and 5 males) second generation members that considered themselves involved in

the demonstrations and the political activism that occurred during the period in question. I also interviewed 5 members (3 females, 2 males) that considered themselves not directly engaged and did not attend the demonstrations. This was to allow for different constructs to emerge as well as to explore how discourses influence even those not 'directly' involved. I accessed these youth through personal and professional networks using 'snow-ball' sampling. The semi-structured interviews were made up of questions designed to compel the discussion to issues of ethnic identity formation in relation to popular discourses and garner insight into the contesting dialogues between the 'Tamil' community and 'mainstream Canadian community'.

Analysis and interpretation of these interviews were done by reducing the text into codes (using line by line coding) and then recombining the codes into themes that were found across the data set. Thematic analysis allowed for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the data.

Interviews are used along with CDA to garner a better understanding of the construction, distribution, and consumption of discourse (Martin Rojo, 2001). CDA is used to analyze the discourses that inform identities, in-depth interviews allow an understanding of the 'subjective interpretations' of the discourses in forming identities (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 730). Subjectivity can be understood as a specific cultural and historical consciousness. Individuals are 'knowing subjects' that are reflexive about themselves and they have some understanding of how these circumstances shape them (Ortner, 2005). Murakami (2003) argues that intersubjectivity can be examined as an attribute of communication in situated social contexts. Interpersonal intersubjectivity is a discursive social construct and subject to negotiation and reformulation. To understand how second generation Tamil Canadians negotiate their subjectivity, I will draw on the idea of positioning. Positioning is a method that allows for an understanding of how people are 'located' and locate themselves within conversations or interviews. Positioning is the process in which account production is negotiated. It allows room for understanding subjectivity as flexible as opposed to thinking of identity or 'positions' as inherent or 'pre-ordinated' with preconceived sets of expected behaviours. People situate themselves in relation to stated positions. In conversations or interviews one is able to explore their 'positions', defend them, or alter

them, in the process positioning others. Therefore, engaging in in-depth interviews provides a space in which to explore how identity is positioned. This methodological approach allows for exploring interviewees' positioning of themselves and others and how they resist being positioned. As well as how they draw on popular discourses on the Tamil Canadian identity in negotiating their own identity. Discourses provide the framework in which we represent ourselves and others. When we take on a subject position we have a set of concepts, images, ways of speaking and self-narratives that we take on (Murakami, 2003, p. 237). CDA hopes to critically analyze these discourses and the interviews allow for an in-depth analysis of how they are (re)negotiated (Boon, Malhi, & Rogers, 2009, p. 259).

Since interviews are understood to be a negotiated process, it becomes necessary that as researcher I reflexively situate my own social position in relation to my study. Being part of the marginalized Tamil Canadian community situates me within a particular dynamic. As a researcher and through my own personal lived experiences and stories shared to me by other members I have a nuanced understanding of the 'othering' in the construction of dominant discourse. Although an 'insider' I am simultaneously made to feel as an 'outsider'. As a researcher I am relegated a different social status by the interviewees. My intentions were looked at warily. Being not a politically active member myself I was made to feel 'othered' by the interviewees at times. However, since I was examining issues pertinent to the community these members felt that I was contributing to the Canadian Tamil discourse in a positive light. At times I felt that my own position as a Tamil Canadian female allowed the interviewees to address issues in a manner in which they recognized that I probably had undergone similar conditions and therefore understood. Often times I could personally relate to these individuals' experiences. It is evident that my social position is not static. I have different social roles and they all interplay in different ways and shape my understanding, whether that is as a member of the Tamil community or researcher. These roles intersect, they are discursively shaped and shape how I analyze discourse.

The limitations to my methodology need to be addressed. Employing both CDA and interviews I do not make claims to objective widespread results or representativeness. I do not think objectivity is a goal to be aimed for when studying popular discourses and

identity constructions. Often studies that aim for such 'objective' results fail to account for the nuances that are of importance when understanding identity construction, thereby creating limited understandings of these realities. Narrow understandings have adverse implications for policy constructions. The study is intended to give an in-depth exploration of a sample of popular discourse and the negotiation of these constructions and infer reasons and implications of such discourses. In addition, textual analysis as well as interviews by their constructed nature is selective, starting from the texts I utilize to the questions that I as a researcher choose to ask. I do account for methodological weaknesses and meet ethical expectations.

## **CHAPTER 3: MEDIA ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 MEDIA CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

In January of 2008 the Government of Sri Lanka withdrew from its Ceasefire Agreement with the LTTE. This signified the commencing of the Sri Lankan Army's new mandate to eradicate the LTTE at all costs. With a new decree, the Sri Lankan Army began its offensive to end the war. By September of that year the Sri Lankan government ordered the UN and other international humanitarian organizations to leave the Vanni area. They barred journalists and any independent human rights agencies from monitoring the situation (Somasundaram, 2010, p. 6). Journalists and politicians that were perceived as reporting against the state were either intimidated or killed.

By early January 2009 the Sri Lankan government was able to capture the LTTE's administrative center in Kilinochchi. Retreating from the Sri Lankan army the LTTE was forced into a 100-square kilometre stretch of territory near northeastern Mullaitivu district (Human Rights Watch, 2009, 3). Forcibly taking civilians with them. There were many reports by independent organizations such as Human Rights Watch that the LTTE denied the civilian population from fleeing the area (Human Rights Watch, 2009, 1). Those leaving the LTTE controlled territories to government areas were placed in internment camps. Since March 2008 the population of these camps increased substantially (Human Rights Watch, 2010, 2). At the war's end an estimated 300,000 civilians were caught in the middle (Somasundaram, 2010, p. 2). Both sides committed grave human rights abuses and violated notions of international humanitarian laws and laws of war (Human Rights Watch, 2009, 1). This last stage of the war was marked by large number of civilian casualties. UN estimates at least 7,000 people were killed and 13, 000 were injured during the last five months of the war (Human Rights Watch, 2009, 3). Much of the civilian deaths and injuries were the result of bombing of 'safe zones' (Somasundaram, 2010, p. 6).

Amidst tremendous loss of civilian lives, massive displacement, large number of the population forced into internment camps<sup>7</sup> the Sri Lankan government had successfully carried out its intended mandate. With the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran the leader of

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<sup>7</sup> The number by the end of the war had reached over a quarter million (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government declared an official victory in the 26 year long conflict that had cost between 80, 000 to 100, 000 lives (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

It was these events that set in motion the mass political mobilization by the diaspora worldwide. As the war was intensifying and the conditions deteriorating the call for action in the diaspora took on a greater urgency. Corresponding to the increased volatility in Sri Lanka the height of mobilization and political engagement by the diasporic community was between January 2009 and June 2009. Demonstrations became larger as reports were making way that the conflict was worsening in Sri Lanka. On May 10 after reports of massive shelling of civilians in safe zones, the demonstrators in frustration due to of the lack of action by the international community marched onto the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto halting traffic on a major highway. It was the first time the otherwise legal demonstrations had taken an illegal turn. It was after this incident that the demonstrations managed to garner the great media attention they received. Most reports in the data corpus were from the month of May which coincided with the ending of the war as well as the Gardiner Expressway demonstration.

Table 3.1 Coverage during sample period

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>TORONTO STAR</b>	<b>NATIONAL POST</b>	<b>THE GLOBE AND MAIL</b>
JANUARY	1	0	0
FEBURARY	1	0	0
MARCH	1	1	0
APRIL	1	1	1
MAY	6	4	3
JUNE	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>

In terms of newspaper coverage it was pretty much in line with the ideological orientations of the papers. The National Post had relatively very unsympathetic coverage.

They provided very little context in terms of the rationale for the demonstrations and the demonstrators' concerns. Their editorials were mainly concerned with terrorism and the irreconcilability of Tamil identity with Canadian values. The Globe and Mail also had most of their coverage in the final months of the war. Although they had a more sympathetic stance than the National Post in their earlier coverage, they too had moved to a more anti-Tamil demonstrator discourse during the final phases of combat. The Toronto Star provided a much more nuanced, multi-dimensional coverage. Their earlier coverage could be read as more sympathetic than their latter. They did provide more contexts to the issues plaguing the diaspora, which the other papers had not done in the same respect. They also called on Canada and the international community to respond to the demonstrators. As coverage continued the context lessened. Their coverage did become progressively more negatively as the conflict continued, however space was provided for different voices.

In line with Fairclough, discourse analysis looks at language found in the media as not simply 'neutral' but rather as having ideological effects. Ideological representations maintain and change social relations of power. In this case looking at popular constructions of Canadian and diasporic identities allows for an analysis of Canadian Tamil identity and its incorporation into the Canadian multiculturalism framework.

Taken for granted assumptions of the nation-state as a 'natural' entity is no longer seen as a sufficient explanation for its existence. Rather, it is understood as an imagined construct requiring constant production. Canada therefore is a construction, a set of representations (Bannerji, 2000, p. 64). This construction influences individual subjectivity formation within its borders. Nationalism is the art of making the nation seem natural (Billig, 1995). One mechanism in which this is accomplished through is the daily newspaper. According to Benedict Anderson (1991) newspapers allow for people to participate in a national discourse and in the process identify themselves in such terms. Technologies of communication allow people who are separated across time and space to imagine a sense of collectivity with others. Through consumption of the media people are able to share collective experiences that allow them to develop a sense of belonging to a larger imaged community (Hall, 2002, p. 126). This is achieved through mechanisms of identification and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion. The media through their

choices in what they present are able to make the audience forget differences within the community.

Scholars have recognized that national identity is produced through processes in which an 'other' is created in which to define the national identity against (Mackey, 2002, p. 119-120). Subsequently, in the process of creating an 'other' a 'same' is produced or what the Canadian identity aligns itself with is substantiated. Therefore, to garner a better understanding of the Canadian national identity it is necessary to look at who it perceives itself to be like as well as who it perceives itself not to be like. The constant reinforcement of the superiority of the community can create a strong sense of identity. Selective presentation of views allows for the support of a specific ideology in the media (Ranganathan, 2002, p. 55). For Ong (1999) the current 'informational age' increasingly is more organized by print, film and other media technologies. Therefore, new fields of power influence social norms by circulating images and narratives. Representation in the mass media plays an important role in forming our cultural subjectivity (p. 158; Mahtani, 2008, p. 231). Drawing on the centrality of newspapers in national identity creation this chapter examines how Canadian national identity is constituted in media/popular discourse by utilizing Fairclough's CDA (with a focus on discourse and intertextuality).

Discourses are ways of representing material, social, and mental positionings of the world. Different views on the world are linked to different relations people have with the world depending on their position, their identities, and their relationships with other people. Discourses are one of the resources that people use in relating to others, whether that is to separate themselves, cooperate, compete, or dominate (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

The following will provide a thorough analysis of the two most prominent discourses that emerged in the chosen texts across the newspapers, 1) terrorism and Tamil identity and 2) Canadian identity. I argue that media accounts which are both reflective and constitute popular discourses reproduce particular constructions of belonging and 'othering'. In this case 'othering' is done by presenting Tamil identity as primarily one associated with terrorism. Belonging is constituted on notions of 'Canadianness'. These constructions are normalized, in the process creating the measures in which cultures and



identities in Canada are seen as suitable for incorporation into the wider project of Canadian nation building.

[I]s the U.S. likely to alter its foreign policy because Tamils in Toronto protest outside their consulate? Not likely-especially since many waved the flags of the Tigers, a listed terrorist organization. It appears to have escaped the notice of demonstration organizers, but the U.S. does not look kindly on terrorist sympathizers. (Editorial, 2009, May 1, The Globe and Mail)

The Tamil protests around the globe demanding international intervention in Sri Lanka have been a compelling sight. The Tigers' red flags have symbolized the movement. That flag is potent semiotic, with crossed rifles and ammunition behind a big striped carnivore. Not symbols of peace, no matter how peaceful some of the protests have been. (Mraz, 2009, May 15, National Post).

There's nothing wrong with lending our ear, and our empathy, to the estimated 200,000 Tamils who have settled in Canada and are overwhelmed by the plight of loved ones still in Sri Lanka. But that doesn't make it right for Tamils to impose roadblocks and wave Tiger flags as a way of pressuring Canadians to support Tamil independence, any more than one would tolerate Sikh separatists blocking University Ave. (Cohn, May 26, Toronto Star)

### *Terrorism and Tamil Identity*

The most reoccurring discourse within the texts is the association of the Tamil identity with terrorism. This is true across the different papers to different degrees as demonstrated in the above quotes. Firstly, there is a conflation between Tamil demonstrators and the Tamil community as a whole. Divergences within the community for the most part were not recognized [exception of one Toronto Star article (Cohn, 2009, May 26)]. Not all Tamils were out demonstrating. This can be seen as an effect of liberal multiculturalism in which all ethnic minority communities are viewed as homogenous. Regardless, the common conception was that the demonstrators uniformly represented Canadian Tamils. This homogenisation of the Tamil community becomes especially problematic with the conflation of Tamils and Tigers. Popular discourse holds Tigers as terrorists, all Tamils are seen as Tigers, and therefore all Tamils are Terrorists. The National Post throughout their coverage made this conflation, providing no space for divergent discourses to emerge. One editorial in the National Post by John Mraz (2009,

May, 15) blatantly states, “In the minds of most of the public, Tamils are all Tigers.” Further, entrenching this idea of a ‘terrorist identity’ was the one-dimensional manner in which the demonstrations were seen as ‘Tiger’ events. The National Post held that these were terrorist demonstrations for terrorists, “One is left to wonder what their [demonstrators] real goal is: saving Tamils, or saving the remaining leadership of the Tigers.” (Editorial, 2009, April 29). Tamils in the National Post were portrayed as not supporting peaceful change in Sri Lanka, “supporting peaceful change in Sri Lanka does not appear to be one of the ‘choices’ on this perceived menu.” They were also deemed as having failed to establish organizations that were ‘free from links to terror’ (Editorial, 2009, April 29). This ignores the fact that there are many organizations that exist with no ties to the LTTE. The National Post also propagated the view that the demonstrators were more concerned with protecting the LTTE than actual humanitarian issues. As such, ‘real Canadians’ were warned against this reality, and the benevolence they bestowed upon these groups was to be limited:

While all Canadians must be concerned about the killing of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka, there should be no misunderstanding about the objectives of the demonstrators who blocked the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto on Sunday. If primary concern had been the safety of Tamil civilians, they would have been calling on the Tamil Tigers to allow those trapped in the war zone to flee to safe areas, instead of using them as human shields. Clearly, however, the objective of the demonstrators was to bring about a situation that would allow the Tigers to preserve their fighting capability and prolong the insurgency. (Collacott, 2009, May 13).

The Globe and Mail although more balanced in their coverage also became less sympathetic to the demonstrators as the final stages of the war were underway. An example of the conflation of the demonstrators with terrorism is quite clear in Blatchford’s editorial:

I couldn’t begin to count the number of tiny, red paper flags or the Tiger T-shirts I saw, though I did note that one of the chants had the person at the megaphone yelling, ‘Tamil Tigers!’ and the crowd answering, ‘Freedom Fights!’ This stuck me as not very respectful of the Canadian Parliament and the elected representatives who decided, in their wisdom, to put the Tigers on the terror watch list. (2009, May 12, The Globe and Mail).

The Toronto Star had started with more balanced editorials but they too increasingly engaged in the terrorism discourse as the demonstrations gathered momentum in the final stages of the war. However, it should be recognized that although the Toronto Star did allude to the demonstrations in connection with terrorism in Sri Lanka for the most part the demonstrators were not directly identified as terrorists. Although, certain editorials did make this claim “My fear is that the protestors have used up precious political capital in Canada by defending a losing cause—a separate Tamil state and a discredited terrorist group” (Cohn, May 26, Toronto Star). This is the discourse that emerges even after the official conclusion of the war. This signifies the long-term implications the terrorism discourse has in Canada despite the events in Sri Lanka. However, it should be noted the Toronto Star did recognize divergent discourses and the fact that not all Tamils are Tigers. Fiorito (2009, May 22) writing about the demonstration on the Gardiner acknowledges that many people do make this unfair conflation “Some people will go on thinking that the march caused an accident; let’s pin it on the Tamils, and therefore on the Tigers.”

The second way in which an ‘othering’ discourse was reproduced in the media was by portraying the demonstrators as not having legitimate claims to demonstrate. The demonstrations were deemed as irrational, disruptive and employing ‘terrorist tactics’. The National Post presented the demonstrations as illegitimate hostile takeovers by Tamil terrorists holding the city hostage. John Eisan (2009, May 12) writes:

As a downtown resident, I would like to thank Michael Ignatieff for giving in to another hostage-taking by the Tamil Tigers... The protestors have said that should promises not be fulfilled, they will be back at it again and again until they get what they want... And there’s not much *we* can do about it [emphasis added].

Tamils are presented as having no respect for Canadian laws and exercising extreme measures, “[T]he Tigers will resort to measures as extreme as putting innocent children in harm’s way in order to further their cause” (when discussing the demonstrations on the Gardiner Expressway) (Eisan, 2009, May 12). Tamils are made out to be angry ‘mobs’ that need to be removed from the streets, in the process illustrating who has ‘legitimate’ claim to public spaces. One editorial in the National Post frames the demonstrations as ‘subjecting the country’s most expensive labour to the constant angry thrum of folk

drumming' (Editorial, 2009, April 29). This statement also alludes to the idea that the demonstrators are unproductive citizens blocking labour. Contemporary citizenship being tied to labour productivity portrays the demonstrators as undesirable citizens.

The Toronto Star progressively began representing Tamils in a similar manner as the war was reaching its final stages and after the Gardiner Expressway incident. Tamils were depicted as irrational and relentless until their demands were met, "Can the people protesting the Tamil Eelam events not see they have made their point and now are just driving public sympathy away? To be brutally *practical*, what can Stephan Harper or any other Canadian politician do?" [Emphasis added] (Letters to the Editor, 2009, May 13). This also alludes to the idea that since these behaviours are irrational, Canada should not play a role in the conflict. Overall, the Toronto Star did provide more balanced views on the issues.

There are several reasons that can explain the unsympathetic turn, increased allegations levied against the LTTE for employing inhumane tactics, negative coverage to legitimize inaction by Canada, or simply because the demonstrations had grown in response to the war's end and therefore garnered more attention. Regardless, the coverage had negative implications for the way in which the Canadian Tamil community was represented.

Another reoccurring theme that spoke to this wider discourse tying the Tamil identity to terrorism was the debate over the 'Tamil Eelam' or 'LTTE' flag. This was one of the first features of the demonstrations that received substantial attention. The 'Tamil Eelam' (flag representing a separate Tamil state or the Tamil nation) or the 'LTTE flag' was perceived and represented solely as the LTTE flag. No alternative views on the flag emerged in the current sample. There was no questioning of whether this was in actuality a LTTE flag. What were missing from this discourse were the opinions of the community itself. Many interviewees expressed different views on the flag. Some did not view it as a LTTE flag, some viewed it as a Tamil Eelam flag. Some did view it as a LTTE flag but felt this was the only alternative voice available to them. The fact that they did not view the LTTE as a terrorist organization was altogether neglected in the media. The only view that was represented of the demonstrators was, these are terrorists, what they do and how they do it is antithetical to Canadian values, 'The protesters have flown the LTTE

flag alongside the Canadian flag-an insult to *our* own country” [emphasis added] (Editorial, 2009, April 16).

Five out of 6 National Post, 3 out of 4 Globe and Mail, and 3 out of 10 articles in the Toronto Star espoused the terrorism discourse. The prominence of this discourse speaks to the widespread belief that the demonstrators (who are seen as representative of the Tamil Canadian community) are LTTE supporters, implying that the Tamil Canadian identity is associated with terrorism. Support for issues in Sri Lanka were framed as supporting terrorism and thereby in conflict with being ‘Canadian’.

The above analysis illustrates the way in which media discourses reproduce an ‘othering’ discourse by illegitimizing diasporic identities and their causes within the Canadian context. By examining editorials on the demonstrations it allowed for an analysis of the ideological representations of ‘Tamil’ identity and the different ways it is discredited. In order for this identity to be ‘othered’ a norm is established in which the Canadian Tamil identity is measured against. This was done by reproducing a limited understanding of the Canadian identity, which will be analyzed below.

### Canadian Identity

The second most common discourse to emerge within the texts on the demonstrations was what constitutes Canadian identity. The early editorials accomplished this by looking at how Canadian identity was defined in terms of Canada’s obligations to the demonstrators. There was a view that Canada should take a stance on the issue in Sri Lanka as that is what they are positioned to do on the world stage, “Canada is well positioned to become an example to all the world...Let this be our courageous stand in the world” (Letters to the Editor, 2009, March 23). Canada’s role as ‘peacekeeper’ in the international community is viewed as an important constituent of the Canadian national identity narrative, as such some editorials called for Canada to get involved in Sri Lanka. However, this was not framed as an obligation to Canadian Tamils. The issue was not seen as a ‘Canadian’ issue, “Really, it’s not about us. It’s not about Toronto’s Tamils, as numerous as they are. It’s about the people of Sri Lanka...” (Cohn, 2009, May 26).

However, a counter discourse did emerge in later editorials in the Toronto Star. There were articles that spoke to the notion that Canada does have an obligation to Tamils here and therefore it is a Canadian issue. One writer wrote in stating that they were disappointed in the government for not helping with the issues in Sri Lanka and that Canada had a responsibility because of its large Tamil population, “Canada has a particular responsibility in this crisis, given its large Tamil population. They are failing Canadians.” (Editorial, 2009, May 13). Although small this divergence within popular discourse should be acknowledged.

The second discourse on Canadian identity that emerged as the demonstrations continued was the clear demarcation of what was deemed appropriate behaviour of ‘true Canadians’ in the process defining ‘Canadian values’. The right to assemble and protest was seen as a democratic Canadian right but this was to be limited when demonstrators engaged in tactics that were antithetical to the ‘Canadian ethos’. Henry and Tator (1999) argue that racism is no longer overt rather those in power present themselves as defenders of traditional democratic principles and liberal ideals. The focus is not overtly on race but rather framed in terms of the protection of national identity (p. 91). In the current case, as one person wrote “While staging non-violent protest marches is well within the Canadian political tradition, convening a mob to praise an illegal terrorist organization is not” (Editorial, 2009, April 29). There is a sense that the demonstrators failed to acquire ‘Canadian’ social values. There is also a sense that ethnic minorities need to prove their ‘Canadianness’. Christie Blatchford in her editorial states “I know already that some readers will argue that Tamils are Canadians, too, and of course they are, but I have to say this was not terribly in evidence...” (Blatchford, 2009, May 12). ‘Canadianness’ is extended to groups, however with conditionalities.

Later discourses that emerged framed the Canadian identity explicitly in terms of multiculturalism,” Torontonians rightly celebrate the multicultural nature of their city. *But* such sentiments were tested this week...” [Emphasis added] (Editorial, 2009, April 29). However, this multiculturalism is seen as in need of limit due to its ‘excessive’ tolerance. There is a sense that Canadians in their quest not to be viewed as intolerant do not question minorities’ behaviour even if it is seen as being incompatible with ‘Canadian

values’, “our reflexively Canadian impulse to avoid offending or judging the Tamil protestors who blockaded our streets and hijacked a highway” (Cohn, 2009, May 26).

Canadian multiculturalism is positioned as reluctant to question minority groups even if their behaviour is ‘unCanadian’. Canada’s tolerance is seen as exploited by these groups and in the process has created passive ‘Canadians’ who do not question the ‘multiculture other’. Tamil Canadians who do voice concerns about incorporation into the Canadian nation building project were portrayed as ungrateful and unjustifiably accusing Canada of discrimination, “When police belatedly did move on Thursday morning to nudge the protestors off the street, one screamed, ‘You guys can’t push us off. You only care about protecting certain kinds of people.’ It is hardly a fair criticism” (Editorial, 2009, May 1). By popular discourse framing the Canadian identity as tolerant of differences it negates acknowledging its discriminatory practices. As Mackey (2002) argued Canada’s victimized identity allows for the victimization of its ‘internal other’. In this case legitimating the denial of Tamil-Canadian’s grievances:

[P]rotests raise questions about whether Tiger-friendly Tamil-Canadian ringleaders are committed Canadians who are sincerely concerned with the fate of their hyper-extended Tamil family-or exiles who have been biding their time on Canadian soil, waiting for the Tigers to win the war and build Tamiltopia (Editorial, 2009, April 29).

Popular discourses concerning Canadian identity establishes and reproduces a discourse that propagates ‘Canadian’ values as antithetical to ‘Tamil’ values. Canadians believe in democratic rights and ‘appropriate’ behaviours. Tamils are seen as engaging in ‘unCanadian’ tactics, violating laws and misbehaving. ‘Canadianness’ is conditional based on approved behaviour. There is a sense of who is allowed to bestow what is considered ‘Canadian’. There is an implicit assumption that people can hold on to their beliefs as long as it conforms to ‘Canadian values’ and does not go beyond what is accepted as ‘Canadian issues’. Groups that go beyond what is accepted are denied ‘Canadianness’. Multiculturalism is viewed as an outgrowth of Canadian benevolence. These groups are seen as taking advantage of this generosity by seeking a redistribution of resources. Canada is seen as a victimized entity whose generosity is being exploited. Canada as victim allows the limiting of multiculturalism as part of Canadian identity. To allow forms of multiculturalism that addresses ‘global issues’ is deemed unfavourable to

Canadian society and identity. One article goes as far as saying that allowing such ‘global’ acts like the demonstrations will lead to Canada’s first suicide bombing:

Alok Mukherjee of the Toronto Police Services Board has declared that as a ‘global city’, we must accept the type of ‘global protests’ that have repeatedly paralyzed parts of Toronto in recent days. In light of escalating demonstrations and the fire at the Buddhist temple last Friday, suspected by some to have been set by Tamil Tiger sympathizers, it is not too difficult to see how this ‘global protest’ will eventually play itself out our very first suicide bomber. If and when that occurs, I will wait with great anticipation for Mr. Mukherjee’s pronouncement in defence of such ‘global’ act (Golets, 2009, May 18).

Analyzing widespread discourses demonstrates the ways in which the editorials depicted the ‘Tamil’ identity as an ‘other’ in juxtaposition to the ‘normalized’ benevolent ‘Canadian’ identity. Although it should be acknowledged the dichotomy is not that rigid considering the Toronto Star had published few articles in support of the demonstrations. The following section will move beyond looking at the broad discourses and focus on how social actors were framed and the voices that were given space to emerge. This will speak to issues of how identities are ‘othered’ in terms of which voices are privileged and which are repressed.

### 3.2 FRAMING AND QUOTATION PATTERNS

Intertextuality is selective in the sense of what is included and excluded from the events and texts represented (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55). This section will focus on the representation of social actors during the demonstrations through an analysis of framing and quotation patterns. Framing looks at how voices when incorporated into text are ‘framed’ or positioned. In terms of quotation patterns reports of actors’ speech, both direct and indirect is an important indicator of the degree of intertextuality within the texts. By studying the representation of social actors through quotation patterns one is able to analyze which actors are empowered and which are repressed. This also allows an understanding of popular discourses on the relations social actors have with the world and other actors (Li, 2009, 95).

When looking at reported speech Fairclough (2003) argues that two issues must be accounted for 1) the relationship between the quote and the original event that is reported and, 2) what work does the quote do in the overall text (p. 51). The social actors quoted



can be placed into 3 categories 1) Tamil Canadians/demonstrators, 2) Canadians, 3) Canadian/international officials. Most of the voices within the texts were reported indirectly. Tamils were seen to be terrorized by the LTTE in Toronto, leaving no room for alternative voices. There were no direct reports of these widespread claim making. Paradoxically, demonstrators were seen as both active agents supporting terrorists and within the same articles framed as being victimized by these groups and in need of saving. John Mraz states, “The Tigers, even here in Canada, are reported to use tactics of coercion and intimidation to keep the Tamil community quiet and on their side” (2009, May 15). Implicit in this is a construction of Canadian identity as one that believes in freedoms and rights as opposed to these ‘others’. Canadian identity is equated with benevolence and seen as a saviour of these groups that are being victimized. Therefore, it is in their capacity to decide who is deserving of aid.

In terms of the relationship between the reports and the original events there was a disconnect. The manner in which issues were presented did not reflect the goals of the demonstrators. Although Tamils were seen as Tigers there were no direct quotes expressing this sentiment. There is no voice on why they support the LTTE. There was one direct quote but this was only to set up the idea that they are the only group fighting for Tamils in Sri Lanka because they had eliminated alternative moderate Tamils:

When one of the demonstrators was asked by an interviewer why she was carrying a Tamil Tiger flag, she replied that it was because this was the only group that was fighting for the interest of Tamils in Sri Lanka. To the extent that there is any truth in this statement, it is a reflection of the fact that the Tigers have relentlessly hunted down and murdered moderate Tamils. (Collacott, 2009, May 13).

Supporters of the demonstrations were not represented in the reports. In one article the editor talks about letters he received expressing anger over the demonstrations, “When protests by thousands of Tamils recently paralyzed not only downtown Toronto streets but also a major expressway, scores of people wrote in to express their anger” (Russell, 2009, May 16). However, he fails to represent voices of those that supported the demonstrations and the demonstrators. There was no mention in any of the articles of any of the others groups and members of other communities that came out to the

demonstrations. This can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to set up an adversarial relationship between ‘Canadians’ and ‘Tamils’.

By assessing who is allowed a voice there is a sense that ‘Canadian’ voices are more valued than those of ‘Tamil Canadians’. Tamil voices are indirectly quoted illustrating their marginalization in dominant discourse. Direct voices are mostly given to ‘Canadians’ that were against the demonstrations, arguing it to be illegal and against ‘Canadian’ values:

When Ghormy Theva and other supporters ventured on to the Gardiner, they crossed the line [sic] when it comes to the freedoms we are thankful to have in Canada. Do they think other Canadians will respect the opinions of those who resort to mob rule, breaking laws and putting innocent people at risk? (Letter to the Editor, 2009, May 13).

‘Canadians’ are given direct quotes systematically disempowering Tamil voices. Similarly, most direct quotes came from ‘officials’, like the police chief, UN High Commissioner, Foreign Minister, who mostly supported the claim that the LTTE were terrorists. This illustrates a hierarchy in terms of whose voice is considered important enough to report and those that are systematically excluded. This is not to argue that the Tamil Canadian voice was totally alienated within popular discourse. There were few articles that focused on the rationale of the demonstrators and their reason to be out there. This was most apparent in Toronto Star publications (Fiorito, 2009, May 12; Fiorito, 2009, May 22; Letters to the Editor, March 23; Letters to the Editor, May 13; Moorthy, 2009, April 24)

### 3.3. CONCLUSION

Representation of social actors in terms of quotation patterns and framing illustrates how popular discourse constructs understandings of diasporic identities. There is a sense that Tamil Canadians are all LTTE supporters which is antithetical to Canadian identity that does not believe in terrorism. Tamils who are involved in transnational political activism are discursively defined and constructed as supporting terrorism or being terrorists themselves. They are simultaneously seen as being victimized by the LTTE and being perpetrators of this victimization. There is a sense that to engage in ‘global’ acts such as these demonstrations signifies non-commitment to Canada.

Canadian identity is seen as what Tamils are not. To advocate for transnational issues is to be 'unCanadian'. Multiculturalism is seen as in need of being limited. Expressing diasporic identities is seen as a downside of multiculturalism and as a hindrance to Canada's nation building process. Resistive voices do emerge at certain times within the dominant discourse arguing both that Tamils are Canadians and the issues are very much 'Canadian'. For Kumaran Moorthy by listing the LTTE as a terrorist organization Canada had taken a stance, making it a Canadian issue:

In 2006, the government added the Tamil defence apparatus to the list of proscribed organizations, thereby preventing Canadians from making financial contributions toward the Tamil struggle for survival. The minute Canada ventured into taking a side in the conflict in Sri Lanka, as Canadians we no longer had the luxury to say 'it is not our fight'. (Moorthy, 2009, April 24)

According to Wodak (2007) 'the practices and politics of exclusion are inherently and necessarily rooted in language and communication' (p. 659). Current studies of exclusion and inclusion cannot be straightforward because the ideal of tolerance is readily accepted. Overt propagation of exclusion is in violation of widely received principles of liberalism. It is only through close analysis can ideological frameworks within popular discourse be explored. This speaks to the fact that the political demonstrations in popular discourse was reduced to one of whether Canadian Tamils were supporting terrorism and whether they were 'real Canadian' as opposed to the humanitarian concerns. Discursive differentiation of 'us' and 'them' shapes the debates on citizenship and ultimately participation in decision-making. According to van Dijk (1993) justification of inequality requires two strategies, the positive representation of one's own group and the negative representation of the 'other' (p. 264). This analysis attempted to look at how this was accomplished in Canadian popular discourse on Canadian Tamil identity within the larger framework of Canadian multiculturalism. Negative representation of Canadian Tamils justified Canadian inaction.

Representation plays an important role in identity construction. Stuart Hall (1998) argues that examining how identities are positioned in 'regimes of representation' it is possible to see the exercise of cultural power that informs these identities. In this case by looking at Tamil Canadians in the media and in turn their subjective interpretations of these representations it becomes possible to see how these broader discourses on

belonging, 'othering' and multiculturalism inform their identities. Identity is relational and produced through many forms of discourses in relation to power (Hall, 2002). Media constructions are just one exercise of power which these discourses are reproduced within. Since power is changing there is space for negotiating different identities and interpretations of these identities. Combining media analysis which examines popular discourses and subjective narratives that look at second generation Canadian Tamil negotiations of these discourses will serve to advance my argument. I argue that popular constructions of diasporic identities and Canadian national identity as understood within a multiculturalism framework reproduces a notion of the 'diasporic other' whom is relegated to the margins of society. However, these discourses are not passively received by the second generation. There is an element of acceptance and resistance by these members. The disconnect amongst the varying constructions demonstrate a need for a more nuanced understanding of Canadian multiculturalism and citizenship which incorporates the idea of transnational political and cultural practices.

The above analysis demonstrated how popular discourses as expressed through the media reproduce constructions of the Tamil identity in a manner that is incompatible with the Canadian identity, reproducing the 'othering' of Tamils. These constructions confer particular notions of multiculturalism in which diasporic identities are not able to be incorporated into the wider Canadian nation building project. Thus, far the analysis has been top-down, analyzing privileged voices. An understanding of how Tamil Canadians perceive these depictions and how they negotiate these constructions in the formation of their identity is not captured with a media analysis. The following chapter will shift the focus to a more bottom-up, subjective interpretations of these popular discourses.

## **CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter looked at media constructions of diasporic and Canadian identities within a multiculturalism framework. The following analysis will look at how these discourses are negotiated by second generation Tamil Canadians in forming and informing their identities. I argue that these negotiations speak to larger issues of multiculturalism and Canadian citizenship.

A total of 15 interviews were conducted. Ten of these were with respondents that self-identified as politically involved and 5 were with respondents that self-identified as not involved in the demonstrations. This was done to examine how meaning making amongst those not active compare to those that are active. This demonstrates that the discourses have implications for both Canadian Tamils that are politically as well as not politically involved. The findings illustrate that those that consider themselves active and those that do not share similar views about popular representations and identities which will be explored below. Before the findings are discussed I will briefly introduce the interviews.

#### *Self-identified as active:*

Carrie, female, age 19, lives in Scarborough, and is a university student. Her parents migrated to Canada in the late 80s. Ashviny, female, age 19, lives in Scarborough, and is a college student. Her parents arrived in the late 80s. Marie, female, age 27, lives in Scarborough, and works as an engineer. Her parents came to Canada in the early 90s. Swetha, female, age 28, lives in Scarborough, and works as a social worker. Her parents arrived in the early 90s. Nisha, female, age 23, lives in Scarborough, and is a university student. Her parents arrived in the late 80s. Sam, male, age 25, lives in Scarborough, and is a university student. His parents arrived in the early 90s. Shivvy, male, age 21, lives in Mississauga, and is a college student. His parents arrived in the mid-90s. Raj, male, 29, lives in Scarborough, and works as an insurance agent. His parents arrived in the late 80s. Nish, male, age 28, lives in Scarborough, works as a financial analyst. His parents' arrived in the mid-80s. Baasha, male, age 24, works as an investment manager, and lives in Woodbridge. His parents migrated in the mid-80s

*Self-identified as non-active:*

Jason, male, age 20, is a university student, and lives in Etobicoke. His parents came in the mid-90s. Joseph, male, age 25, is a university student, and lives in Mississauga. His parents came in the mid-90s. Jalajja, female, age 24, is a university student, and lives in Etobicoke. Her parents came in the early 90s. Mary, female, age 23, is a university student, and lives in Brampton. Her parents came in the late 80s. Usha, female, age 23, is a university student, and lives in Etobicoke. Her parents came in the late 80s

The interview process was not without its difficulties. Finding interviewees that were not active was easy, perhaps because I had more personal relations with non-active people. Second generation members that were involved were initially apprehensive to talk to me. It was a turbulent time politically and many were wary of ‘outsiders’. Especially with unfavourable media attention there were some doubts as to what would be done with the information collected and what purposes it would serve. Those highly involved were a well connected group and garnering access was difficult at first. However, after accessing few of the members, meeting them, explaining the study and assuring privacy and confidentiality the interviewees did not seem hesitant to speak to me.

As Kathleen Hall (2002) argues identities are actively created, through what she calls acts of translation. People negotiate power and discourses in forming identities. Not only are identities made as a result of these discourses, individuals through processes of negotiation actively make themselves. Interviews are a good way in which to explore these negotiations. As mentioned earlier, according to Murakami (2003) interviews provide a space in which people position themselves and their identities. Interviews also allow interviewees to explain the positioning of themselves and others and how they resist being positioned. In the current study interviews provide a space in which to examine how the interviewees draw on popular discourses on Canadian Tamil identity and notions of belonging in positioning their identity.

It should be recognized that meanings obtained from interviews should be seen as co-constructed through dialogue in the context of the interview (Holstein and Gubrium,

1995, p.4). In an active interview rather than viewing the research participant as a source of information to be discovered the interviewer and interviewee relationship is viewed as a collaborative exploration of meaning, meaning construction, and meaning relevance. Therefore, the interviewer's role in the research process should be acknowledged. The discourses that I draw upon in formulating the questions to a certain degree have a bearing on the discourses that emerge. It should be recognized these are not the only discourses or ways in which identity construction can be understood.

I approached the interviews with a list of questions (see appendix 1) that were asked of all interviewees. Each interview differed in the sense that different questions emerged as each conversation brought to light different issues. I began with very general questions trying to get the interviewees to situate themselves, from there I was able to explore more specific questions related to the research questions. Starting off with general questions and moving towards more specific questions allowed a more collaborative interview. Topics that were to be discussed were often brought up by the respondents themselves, demonstrating that these are discourses that they draw upon in positioning their identities. I explicitly asked questions about the demonstrations and the media accounts which were often brought up by the interviewees themselves. I also questioned them about the role of multiculturalism in Canada which led to discussions of how these discourses played a role in forming and informing their identities.

Those active cited many reasons for their involvement. Reasons ranged from the need to help Tamils, duty as a Canadian, and for one interviewee it was seen as the only avenue in which to express her emotions. Mary, Jalajja, and Jason who self-identify as non-active attributed their non-involvement to their general apolitical nature. Joseph was turned off because of his perception of the flags at the demonstrations. He felt that the demonstrations were supporting the LTTE and he personal did not. Usha did not get involved because she felt that these demonstrations were not beneficial.

Overall several key themes emerged across the interviews which will be analysed in more detail later. Some of these included, discrimination levied against Tamils in Canada, notions of Canadian identity, LTTE as terrorist organization versus freedom fighters, Tamil Eelam flags versus LTTE flags, Canadian multiculturalism, the role of Canada in the conflict, and media coverage of the demonstrations. Both active and non-

active interviewees expressed similar concerns and opinions about the demonstrations and its coverage.

There was a sense amongst all the interviewees that Tamil identity was a marginalized identity in Toronto. They recognized that multiculturalism played an important role in their identity construction but they all acknowledged that it was not sufficient in addressing current realities. They still believed racism exists in Canada. There was a sense that the media represented the events negatively, but there was acknowledgement that there were also positive representations (as illustrated in the media analysis in the previous chapter).

In terms of the flag and support for the LTTE there were divergences between the interviewees. Not all those active supported the LTTE and not all those non-active were against the LTTE. The interviewees' relationship with the LTTE was a nuanced one. Some believed they were terrorists, others did not. Some agreed with the listings, some did not. Some thought the demonstrations supported the LTTE, some did not view the demonstrations as such. These were the important conversations that were taking place in the community but not reflective in the popular discourse. Similarly, some argued the flags flown at the demonstrations were a LTTE flags and others viewed it as Tamil Eelam flags. Some believed that the flags had a place at the demonstrations and some felt they did not. Some agreed with the listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organization, some did not. However, all interviewees agreed the listing of the LTTE had wider negative implications for the Tamil diaspora which plays a role in how they negotiate their identities. The following will provide a more thorough analysis of these themes. All the interviewees believed that Canada and the diaspora have a role in a resolution for Sri Lanka. The degree of this involvement varied across interviews. Interestingly, even those not active argued for the importance of political engagement.

Popular discourses construct 'Tamil' identity as incompatible with 'Canadian' identity. Those with alliances to other nations are seen as having questionable loyalty to Canada, even framed as exploiting Canada. Popular discourses call for limiting multiculturalism which is seen as allowing the flourishing of diasporic identities. These identities are deemed as incompatible with Canadian values. As argued earlier multiculturalism is a defining feature of Canadian national identity. Its ultimate goal is to



ensure an equitable society by recognizing and incorporating different groups into the wider nation-building project. How popular discourse frames multiculturalism affects how diasporic identities form and how they are incorporated into society. The media analysis of how these identities are represented demonstrates to what degree they ‘belong’ and the limits of multiculturalism. The current construction of these identities illustrate that a dichotomy between ‘real Canadians’ and the ‘multiculture/diasporic other’ exists. As mentioned earlier, by adhering to this dichotomy and marking Tamils as incompatible, racism is no longer based overtly on race but rather cultures are seen as ‘inappropriate’. This makes it harder to rectify discriminatory policies because of the subliminal nature of the discrimination. The current multiculturalism does not confer enough power to these groups marginalizing these identities further. It is within this framework that second generation Tamil Canadians negotiate their identities. Drawing on the idea of power, discourse, and representation in identity formation the following section will analyze how the second generation come to position their diasporic identity and how this speaks to ideas of citizenship, multiculturalism, and national identity.

#### 4.2. REPRESENTING DISCOURSE

The media analysis illustrated that overall there is a negative perception of Canadian Tamil identity in popular discourses. The Tamil identity was made out to be associated with terrorism. The demonstrators were thought to represent all Tamils and they were vilified as angry, irrational and using terrorist tactics. They were seen as unproductive to Canadian society and therefore their grievances were not to be heard. Canadian Tamils were deemed as not concerned with humanitarian issues and more worried about protecting their terrorist interests. The following section speaks to how second generation members conceptualize, negotiate, and resist these representations.

##### *Representing Tamils*

One of the most common stereotypes within popular discourses the second generation point out is the perception that Tamils are ‘aggressive’, ‘violent’, and engage in ‘terrorism’. Popular discourse frames the Tamil identity in overtly simplistic terms and second generation members are well aware of this perception.

For Jason, Tamils are always portrayed as violent and being part of gangs:

*The Tamil people were those gangs in Scarborough killing people that is the only media [coverage] I have known. (Jason, 20, male, student)*

When discussing how these stereotypes become widespread, Baasha blames it directly on the media. He states:

*[The media] They have gone out and said all the gangs in Scarborough are Tamils. All the violence in Scarborough is because of Tamil people, and because of that we have a negative impact in Scarborough. (Baasha, 24, male, investment manager)*

This notion of Tamil people as violent is extended to how the demonstrations/demonstrators themselves were portrayed. Nisha felt these were deliberate constructs. Constructs that would not have been formulated had the demonstrators been white.

*We were angry, uncivilized human beings screaming on the streets of Toronto...but we are a racialized, minority group and. The media is gonna, I mean unconsciously they are supposed to portray in certain way the state wants to portray you and that is what happened...The whole Gardiner thing. I remember that day we were watching TV and the only image that they showed was throwing the bicycle at the cop. I mean it was such a thing. It was 6 or 7 hours but the only image that was reprinted in media again, again, and again was throwing that bicycle at the cop it was just you know, I think we were portrayed to be such a violent human beings and with our past in Canada with all the gang violence and gang from the 90's so it was very interesting to see that connection to the 90s and to see what Tamil community is and I think we were, we were seen as the violent beings and that was what was portrayed and those people that were really there with their emotion or who was really there for a cause I don't think their cry came out and they were just blinded...would the media responded the same if white maybe not. (Nisha, 23, female, student)*

The interviewees recognize the conflation of Tamil identity with terrorism in popular discourse.

*The media has screwed us. In the past they have labelled us as terrorist. (Baasha, 24, male, investment)*

### Representing Canadian

Interviewees' construction of 'Canadian' identity is similar to the one expressed in popular discourse. They too view Canadian identity in terms of freedom and opportunities. However, although Canadian identity for the main part was viewed positively by the interviewees, in line with arguments by Bannerji (2000), Saul (2005), and, Lee & Lutz (2005) there is a notion that to be truly Canadian is to be 'white'. This also substantiates Hall's (1998) claim that 'regimes of representations' play a role in making the 'other' see themselves as the 'other'.

Nish states the Canadian identity is, *[I]t is the freedom to do whatever you want to do and I am going to express it. (Nish, 28, male, financial analyst)*

In terms of opportunity there is a sense that to be Canadian is to have access to opportunities that are denied to others. Usha states when asked what is Canadian: *I think my sense of opportunity. The fact that I can do anything I want to here that I choose to. (Usha, 23, female, student)*

Apart from the notion that to be Canadian is to be free there is also a sense that to be Canadian is to be white. Although not explicitly stated in popular discourse there is a sense of 'real Canadians' versus 'multiculture other.' This is articulated by the second generation as well.

Jason feels this most when people ask 'where are you really from?':

*If I say I am from Canada they say where my parents are from so it is easier to cut the middle part and say I am from Sri Lanka... People don't ask where you are actually from*

*they just want to know why your skin colour is like that and where you are from with that skin colour.* (Jason, 20, male, student)

Raj states it as:

*[W]hen people look at us they don't say oh you are Canadian you know, you are still Sri Lankan or you look Tamil, by your name they can tell you are Tamil.* (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)

#### 4.3. IMPLICATIONS OF REPRESENTATIONS

The interviewees acknowledged that these representations had many adverse affects. They recognized that there was a conflation of Tamil identity with Tiger which had wider implications in influencing their identities and how they are perceived by others. Raj states:

*We were all labelled as Tigers, so pretty much you know the experience here was we were labelled as terrorist. If you were protesting even though you are trying to protest for the humanitarian side they made it seem like we were protesting for the Tigers, which when I was at some of the protests they said nothing about the Tigers.* (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)

Mary speaks to this homogenization of the Tamil community:

*I think you are just assuming that if you are Sri Lankan then you are part of that group. That you support it. You support war just because you have that connection. You support the Tigers, you support the cause, it is just assumed, I don't think they question if you do or you don't. They never ask for your opinion, so.* (Mary, 23, female, student)

Mary alludes to the unequal treatment, especially of Tamil males as a result of such labels:

*Everyone thinks you are a Tiger. Or list us. Especially with boys they think you are helping them, helping the Tigers take home through some way, donating money, they are providing them with weapons. People are actually scared of you. They listen to the*

*media. They assume you are a Tiger, you are going to bomb something. (Mary, 23, female, student)*

For Sam the designation was negative in the sense that it negated the only form of representation for Tamil people:

*I really believe it was a bad thing 'cause what they didn't understand was there is a government that is one side then there is another side and you need someone else to represent the other side. Even though some people represent the LTTE as not a great side they were representative of the Tamil people. They did represent a somewhat of a government for the Tamil people. (Sam, 25, male, student)*

Jalajja who agreed with the designation of LTTE as a terrorist organization still recognized the wider unfortunate implications it had:

*[O]nce I knew this Italian boy and I was like I am Sri Lankan and he was like 'oh Tiger' and then he's like 'I am joking I'm sure you are a sweet girl'. I was just like, I don't know what your Tiger means and I don't know know 'I 'm sure you are a sweet', so like what does that all mean. Like how do you even know what a Tiger is? It is weird...That is the thing. He is very Italian. I don't know where he got it from. And I am like. I am like. I was actually. I wanted to be like who told you this? (Jalajja, 24, female, student)*

Usha talks about her school not having a significant number of Tamil students but still feeling the label of terrorist:

*In high school I don't even think we stood out as a group. I don't think anyone noticed us. I think, if anything, for any reason they noticed us it was because we were Tamil Tigers. And for some reasons that was something you feared. I remember Ankit who I have known since kindergarten once said oh don't talk to her she is a Tamil Tiger and I just like looked at him like I don't even think you know what that is. I am not even sure I know what that is. And you known me all my life how could you say that about me. Like, so I don't know, I felt like I was being judged for something that I wasn't even sure, I wasn't even pretty sure what that is. (Usha, 23, female, student)*

Due to these constructions there is an active attempt by the members to enact a form of identity that is very cognizant of this label. They restrain acting in certain ways to divert this label.

Nish states that Tamils are more careful in how they assert their identity because of these constructs: *We watch what we do, how we do things, in terms of. It is just going to create other unnecessary problems.* (Nish, 28, male, financial analyst)

It should also be noted that majority of the interviewees found that designating the LTTE as a terrorist group was a negative move. Not all interviewees supported the LTTE. Some who did not support them did not believe in the designation. Some that supported the LTTE believed in the designation. This heterogeneity within community opinion was not evident within popular discourses.

The interviewees acknowledge the power of these discourses and how they are internalized by Tamil Canadians and how inform their identity.

Baasha speaks about his mother's internalization of these popular representations of the Tamil 'terrorist' identity and how this affects her perception of his activism:

*She is scared because what the, the media portrays us as and she watches the news....I think that, my mom is scared because she thinks that going to a protest we are all going to be thrown in jail.* (Baasha, 24, investment manager)

Shivy who supported the LTTE cause articulates how these representations affected him. Growing up he perceived the LTTE as a terrorist organization due to the media. It was only later in life did he overcome these perceptions:

*[I] would always see in the news that Sri Lanka was attacked by Tamil Tiger rebels, right...so you would hear that and think they were bad kind of thing. And. I remember like I was always very adamant kid. So whatever I wanted to believe I. I would argue with my parents. Oh they are stupid Tamils, blah blah. Right. And then they would sit*

*down and say no, this is why they are doing it and stuff like that.* (Shivy, 21, male, student)

This illustrates the importance of popular discourses in constructing Tamil identity and how they are in turn internalized. Shivy felt Tamils were ‘stupid’ because of how the LTTE was portrayed and since Tamil was conflated with LTTE this led him to perceive all Tamils to be ‘stupid’.

There was a sense by the interviewees that representations of Tamils in popular discourses created an identity that was in contradiction to the Canadian ethos. These representations were seen as creating marginalized identities. This sense of discrimination informs the constitution of their identity. Issues of belonging shape the process of adopting a racialized identity (Rajiva, 2006, p. 180). The interviewees speak of these representations and their racialized experience growing up, and its role in forming their ‘othered’ identity. This sense of marginalization was extended to many facets of their life.

One example that was often cited was discrimination Tamils felt in schools:

*We were always like a really easy target... Well, mostly our community and the black community the authority was completely against and everyone else got by.* (Ashviny, 19, female, student)

Swetha speaks to the tension between the school administration and Tamil students, demonstrating the internalization by these students of their ‘othered’ identity:

*We sort of looked at the vice-principal and the teachers as not there to help us sort of. So. It was a lot of tension even inside the school.* (Swetha, 28, female, social worker)

This coincides with Rajiva’s (2006) argument that second generation members locate their struggles of becoming racialized mostly in their youth. Most of the interviewees when speaking about when they realized the marginality of the Tamil identity attribute it to their younger days, growing up in Toronto. They experienced discrimination in

schools, on the playground, and in the neighbourhood. These were often the first time they realized the marginality of the Tamil Canadian identity. The discrimination they had faced was evident at the demonstrations as well. Baasha recalls a particular incident with a couple of police officers at a demonstration. The police officers had made an observation about Baasha and stated that he was not a ‘Scarborough Tamil’ because he seemed articulate and ‘well behaved’:

*[About police officer] And after talking to them about in 5 minutes they are like oh so we can tell you are not Scarborough Tamils. And I am like how can you tell? They are like you guys don't have that gangster, that gangster image, you guys are very presentable, you guys are very mature, so that is good. (Baasha, 24, male, investment manager)*

Ashviny speaks of negative encounters with police officers as the demonstrations:

*I saw cops being racist, calling us terrorist and stuff. (Ashviny, 19, female, student)*

Carrie speaks to how this racialized identity impacts her political ambitions:

*But when I really noticed it was when I started getting involved with the Young Liberals. I noticed that hey there is no other brown people they are all white. There were few Asians but that was it. Because of it, it worked two ways. It worked to my advantage when they need a token brown person or a token minority to do this. So I always got first pick because I was brown, because I was minority and because I was a female was also kind of thing. But at the same time we can't make her let her make her own decisions. Or we can't let her speak. We have to tell her what to speak because she is a minority she doesn't know what to say. That is when I really realized, before that I never realized I never felt, I never felt that I was racialized. (Carrie, 19, female, student)*

Swetha highlights how the designation affected the demonstrators. She found that it hindered the space for dialogue:

*Like even when we started, tried to talk about the people, people didn't want to hear about the Tamils they started talking about the Tigers. It is just, we [Canadians, interesting to note her conflation of her Tamil and Canadian identity] were having a hard time differentiating between Tamils and Tigers. (Swetha, 28, student, social worker)*



Joseph makes a similar statement about his perceptions of fellow Tamils. He had been embedded with the idea that Tamils were violent and should be steered clear of by both his father and the media. It was only later in life did he realize this stereotype did not hold true:

*I realized that, actually I didn't have a lot of Tamil friends until I joined the Tamil soccer team two years ago. That is when I started hanging out with a lot of Tamil guys and during basketball this year it gave me a more opportunity to get to know some of these guys and they are not all bad as my dad says or the media says. They don't all look for fights alright, just that we as Tamils have a bad name. (Joseph, 25, male, student).*

For Carrie popular constructs of Tamil Canadians make her feel like she does not belong:

*The media tried to stay neutral but there were times where they were viewed, they were just full out these are terrorists right. They shouldn't be here, they shouldn't be doing this. It really upset me, because it's not like we are the only ones to protest. There are like so many groups that protest out there so why is this such a big deal.*

*It affects me personally during the [inaudible] or when I am involved in like outside of, like mainstream stuff I guess. They will be like oh what do you feel about Sri Lanka and the civil war. Like that will be the immediate question when they find out when I am Tamil. Oh were you part of the protests, were you not. Like people would, people would take a second look if they know I am Tamil. They have asked me a lot of questions about...I don't know it was as though oh you are a terrorist. I was like I am born here, what do you mean I am a terrorist right. I am not trying to blow up the CN Tower here. I felt like that is what they are trying to get at...It was just more of like a media perception of thinking of other people. (Carrie, 19, female, student)*

As studies before such as Eckstein (2001), Rajiva (2006), and Zhou (2001) illustrate there is a sense that the second generation experience different forms of alienation than their first generation counterparts. Carrie for example states that she was 'born' here and

therefore questions how and why she would be a terrorist. There is this notion that she is really 'Canadian' and therefore does not understand why she is perceived in this manner.

Marie expressed a similar sentiment:

*I would be in a board room and you know and we would be downtown and events would be going on downstairs and they, they are trying not to bring up the topic. How is your day, how did you get in, they are not trying to bring it up because obviously I am in the room but they don't want to be politically incorrect but you could tell that it was in the back of people's mind and they are talking and evaluating you. (Marie, 27, female, engineer)*

Swetha shared a similar sentiment of feeling relegated to the margins of Canadian society due to these representations:

*Well it hurt me because I am a Tamil and it was my people that were crying out there. It was my people that were sleeping on the streets...I was born in a country and then oppressed and then experience racism and coming to another country and still trying to tell people what happened to you and nobody wants to listen. So you know you sort of feel like a, an outcast. (Swetha, 28, female, social worker)*

However there is a sense that these marginalized constructions helped substantiate the Tamil identity.

Raj speaks of experiences growing up within these constructs:

*I think that is why the Tamil community at least right now has gone together because we were, we were viewed by the other people as something different so we just stuck together, that is why we are so close right now. (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)*

#### 4.4. IDENTITIES AND MULTICULTURALISM

Feelings of marginalization led to the interviewees' negotiation of Canadian multiculturalism. Although multiculturalism was acknowledged as playing an important role in nurturing their Canadian Tamil identity it was not seen as living up to its stated

aims. There was a sense amongst the interviewees in accordance with Bannerji (2000) that multiculturalism continues to bestow to ‘real Canadians’ the power to limit the recognition of diasporic groups as legitimate Canadians with ‘Canadian’ concerns. As Johnson and Kobayashi (2007) state, groups are allowed to participate but power is not extricated from the white majority. Multiculturalism is seen as a method to assign subjectivities and confer agency to these groups however only on non-structural grounds.

Swetha describes Canada as having a multicultural veil:

*The veil is white but underneath you have all these little groups of cultures that are there. So. We will be, we will always be under the multicultural veil because that is for keeping Canada multicultural but at the same time you you don't let them um how do you say it. You don't let them be part of that veil because you, you give these communities the opportunity to have their own organizations um have power within that community and that is why they give this option of like having you to, having your own organization. Like giving you the, the, freedom to practice your religion or culture and everything so the power is within your community and it does not come out in the mainstream political agenda. Because if you don't give that right then all these people are trying to integrate, integrate into the mainstream and trying to get into the power there so. I guess there is a very systemic way of doing things. (Swetha, 28, female, social worker)*

*I think it's just kind of a blanket to hide the kind of racial disparities that are here... I think the Canadian state puts multiculturalism, puts it in a way that it is what the Canadian identity is and everyone kind of works towards that. But in the end it is still, it is just a blanket to hide the kind of racial disparities that are here. And it shuts you up easily that when you do bring it up and you are like I am feeling this, this racial disparity, or this racism, or race comes into play to question of it is just like but oh we are multicultural country you can't, it shuts you up. So it's, it's kind of a blanket because state policies are still created toward a westernized, Caucasian population. (Nisha, 23, female, student)*

Usha argues that although multiculturalism is a lived reality, in the public sphere cultures are not equal. Certain cultures are relegated to the private sphere:

*I think that we can't practice our culture equally, I mean just look at our school system in Ontario. Why is the Catholic schools funded public, that is not equal. The Punjabi school is not funded, the religious school... that that's a systemic racism. I mean some groups are more Canadian than others. No matter how many generations you been here.*  
(Usha, 23, female, student)

Ashviny puts forth a more critical understanding of the role of multiculturalism in informing the Canadian national identity. For her, Canada's lack of a coherent national identity propels it towards multiculturalism:

*[Canada] it is a place where a lot of different coloured people live. It is a place where a lot of different coloured people are supposed to be accepted and tolerated for the colours they are. But it is not. It is just like, it is just words right. You know we need a label. You label the country multicultural.* (Ashviny, 19, female, student)

This is not without recognizing that according to the interviewees Canadian multiculturalism did play an influential role in their identity construction.

Multiculturalism is seen as both informing national identity as well as the Tamil Canadian identity. The interviewees argue that multiculturalism has allowed them to form a more 'cosmopolitan' identity that is more open and accepting of other communities. Mary describes growing up in a multicultural environment and how that helped her form her identity:

*I think it made me a better person. I am more open. I know a lot more about other cultures. They are more similar to us. You are not so narrow minded. I know a lot about other people. I know a lot about other foods. Yea basically, it just opens up to a variety of other cultures.* (Mary, 23, female, student)

*[I] like about Canada, Canada, or Scarborough is its diversity because you are exposed to so many different cultures and different types of people, their problems, and their*

*traditions. There is a lot of good and bad. There is more substance.* (Ashviny, 19, female, student)

Marie very interestingly conceptualizes the role of multiculturalism in informing her identity. She argues that although multiculturalism has relegated her more into her own community it has also allowed her to connect to others:

*I have been so into my community that I don't know if I can say I am multicultural that I know other cultures and you know part of them, different culture but I think being part of my community it has made me realize that there is a potential to you know, that you have to have a certain tolerance of every other issue right.* (Marie, 27, female, student)

#### 4.5. (RE) NEGOTIATIONS

Members of the diaspora recognize the implications of these popular constructions on mainstream society. However, these members do not passively appropriate these constructs, there is a sense of defiance, resistance, and rearticulation. The findings are in line with Hall's (2002) idea that power, inequality, and difference shape these individual's understanding of themselves as Canadian Tamils and what it means to a 'real Canadian'. However, they are creating new identifications in which the two identities are not necessarily viewed in opposition, in the process challenging the basis of belonging within the Canadian multiculturalism framework.

#### *Demonstrating Identity*

According to Saloojee (2004) the struggle for recognition is inherently a struggle against dominant discourse and discrimination (p. 421). The interviewees acknowledged that as much as the demonstrations were about issues in Sri Lanka it was a space in which it was made possible to assert and reaffirm their Tamil Canadian identity. For Teelucksingh (2006) claiming space is a resistive practice in which racialized people attempt to create new identities and different representations. The demonstrations allowed an otherwise divided community to come together and express a common collectivity.

*Most of us were united like I said. None of us had any problems with each other. I seen people who had problems from high school, people who had problems in elementary school and when they came to those protests they shook hands and said whatever we had in the past lets squash it because this is something bigger and our problem is not worth it. (Baasha, 23, male, investment manager)*

*I think it brought everyone together. Um before all this people were had their minds on certain towns before all this, but during the protests everyone came together it didn't matter where you came from...I think the events made me feel that I belonged. I mean growing up I thought I didn't because I couldn't speak the language and stuff. But when I was in the protest the fact that I spoke English didn't matter, it didn't matter about anything. They were just happy that we were happy to help out. And I think that brought a sense of, I belonged. (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)*

Even Jason who did not participate in the demonstrations acknowledged its role in unifying the community:

*It made us closer and stronger. And it made us feel more powerful. (Jason, 20, male, student)*

The demonstrations collectivized the diasporic identity amongst not just Tamils in Canada but other places as well.

*I think it had a positive impact because it brought solidarity among the people that live outside the country to realize that we are a huge population...We might not exist back home but in England, in Canada, and all the different countries we are still there so we are, I mean it showed as a solidarity we have a country, and the youth and all the Tamil people, older, younger came together. So that showed we are still united. We might not be living back home but we are united. (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)*

*It made me wow. Like. I guess define my culture, maybe realize my culture. Like. Yea, it made me realize these are my people. (Shivy, 21, male, student)*

The demonstrations compelled some to become more involved in Tamil activities and substantiate their ‘Tamilness’.

*After these events I really got to know other Tamil people that were involved. I got more heavily involved like in TSA [Tamil Student Association].* (Carrie, 19, female, student)

The demonstrations substantiated the Tamil identity into the Canadian landscape. For Nish the protests were not simply about the issues at home, it was very much about demarcating identity here:

*Everybody knows who we are, what our war was, and why we have a war, and how long we struggled for... I mean now when people walk with their heads proud, to show you know like. It is joke we say sometimes you know. We don't fight anymore we just block highways. It is just, it is just the way we are now. Our personality changed. A lot of people take us more serious I think within the community. They know who we are so.* (Nish, 28, male, financial analyst)

Nisha speaks to this idea of the demonstrations as an assertion of identity:

*[W]as it about the war or was it a chance for the second generation to tell people who they are. Like was it an identity crisis that broke out on the streets of Toronto and I think we need to ask that. Because the way I see it is they kind of took up that flag or took up that stance because it was their only chance that was given to them to show this is who we are, more than this is our politics.* (Nisha, 23, female, student)

For the interviewees the demonstrations brought to light the fact that the Tamil community is a powerful community in Canada.

*I think it brought them attention to their eyes that you know we are a community. We are a strong community in Canada. Whether it brought a negative or positive I mean that is still out there.* (Raj, 29, male, insurance agent)

*A lot of politicians started to noticing that there was a large population of Tamils living here and how come they didn't even reach out to this population and also like the mainstream community started noticing that this community is very united and there is a lot that can be done by this community if they can pull something like this off. (Swetha, 28, female, social worker)*

For the demonstrators these diasporic spaces provide a site in which collective feelings of belonging, representation and politicization were defined and debated. This space also nurtured perceptions of empowerment and agency. It is within such spaces that unity occurs amongst the diaspora. It is here in which a shared consciousness emerges (Mavroudi, 2008, p. 59-60). The demonstrations allowed second generation members to develop a stronger sense of identity. They realized through their understanding of popular discourses that their identities are bounded by issues of national belonging.

#### *Putting the Tamil in Canadian*

Interviewees articulated a 'Canadian' identity that was not in juxtaposition to their 'Tamil' identity. Second generation members espoused a form of hybridity different from the one in popular discourses. One that allowed them to express both identities without the identities being seen in contradiction to each other.

For example for Carrie the Canadian identity is one that allows everyone to exercise their own identities.

*Canadian is, it is just, I guess it is just the set of values that we really believe in like democracy, freedom, multiculturalism. It is us bringing who we are to the table. Like it is me saying I am Tamil and bringing my own issues to the table right. It's, like that is what I think it is like, like everyone bringing their own identity and putting it on the table. (Carrie, 19, female, student)*

Contrary to popular constructions the demonstrations were not symptomatic of Tamils' apathy towards Canada, rather it was the opposite. It was an opportunity to assert their 'Canadianess'. 'Tamils' and 'Canadians' realized the potential of the Tamil community



as a result of the demonstrations. The interviewees stated that now more than ever Tamil Canadians understand that to live a transnational life they must be involved in Canadian 'mainstream' society. This is now a reality due the demonstrations.

*I don't know if you are noticing lately that there are a lot of like Tamil MPs. People are running for government now. I think they are understand that we are getting bigger. There are people are making good money and getting together. Now we are getting into the political aspect, once we get there then the motion is there...Once we get there you will push for it. (Sam, 25, male, student)*

Although the representations were viewed as negative there was a sense that something positive did come out of it. There was a sense that it brought the issue into Canadian mainstream with people questioning them. Carrie while speaking to the discrimination she felt as a result of the demonstrations, asserts that something positive did come:

*In a way it is a good thing they are asking these questions. Hey I get to have a conversation about back home so yea. (Carrie, 19, female, student)*

Many interviewees emphasized that the demonstrations were an assertion of being 'Canadian' and an opportunity to exercise their rights as Canadians.

Mary frames it within a rights discourse:

*Yea I guess they feel freedom to do the protests and everything, they can't do that back home where you would get killed so that part of being Canadian they realize yea we have the freedom to do anything we want. (Mary, 23, female, student)*

*Yea I felt like we really exercised being a Canadian right. Protests and stuff that is what Canadian's [are] allowed to do. That is what you know, we praise our democracy, our freedom, we have the right to do this. I felt like before that we were not exercising our political right. (Carrie, 19, female, student)*

*I realised that like before if somebody asked me I would say I am Tamil but I guess after these events I would say I am Tamil Canadian...Being involved in Canadian things here for us to actually express ourselves and I thought, I thought of the support we got from non-Tamils at that point. I saw the support. And I saw the importance of being Canadian and I mean the freedom of speech and what we can stand for, what we can stand up for in... Can't differentiate a Thamil Canadian, that means I lose the identity of being Thamil and I can't just be Tamil 'cause then I will lose the identity of being Canadian. (Swetha, 28, female, social worker)*

This also speaks to Sundar's argument in which second generation 'bring down the brown' or act more 'Canadian' when it helps them acquire resources (2008; Hall, 2002). However, the findings illustrates that identities do not fit this simple dichotomy. Rather, these identities are simultaneously asserted. To understand identity simply as 'Bringing down the Brown' or 'Browning it up' is to understand identity within a simple binary configuration. Viewing identity through a diasporic lens allows both an understanding of the simultaneity as well as the nuances of these identities.

Tamil Canadians' conceptualization of 'Canadianness' echoes those expressed in popular discourses. However, this conceptualization differs from popular discourses in terms of how Tamil Canadians negotiate their own 'Canadianness'. The interviewees feel very much 'Canadian'.

*I believe I am Canadian, I do, I am not going say I am not. I believe I am Canadian. (Baasha, 24, male, investment manager)*

For Baasha 'Canadian' is just the simple fact of living here:

*But being Canadian is just. Living here in Canada and living the right ways. (Baasha, 24, male, investment manager)*

Sam also articulates this feeling of not being able to deny his 'Canadianness':

*Um to tell you the truth I, I am Canadian, I am not going to lie to you.* (Sam, 25, male, student)

Some also expressed feeling less ‘Canadian’ as a result of the demonstrations. This was not because they felt less attached to Canada and more attached to a Sri Lankan identity but rather they felt Canada did not recognize them.

Marie felt that she was very much ‘Canadian’. However, the way the demonstrators were constructed in popular discourses made her feel alienated from her ‘Canadian’ identity, *‘When it was portrayed so negatively I thought ok we really don’t belong here. We are outside of it yea.’* (Marie, 27, female, engineer)

Everyone interviewed felt they had a Tamil Canadian or Canadian identity. The only exception was Jason who stated that although he felt just ‘Canadian’ he was still perceived as Tamil Canadian. Most members echoed Joseph’s sentiment, *‘I always thought of myself as in-between. I know what I have, where I came from, what it is to be a Tamil.’* (Joseph, 25, male, student)

Drawing on Murakmi’s (2003) work it becomes evident that identities are situational and partly communicated based on the situated social context, in this case how they are explored in an interview setting. The interview is an active negotiation. Self-knowledge is tentative, contingent, situated in a particular time and space. It is not original experience as lived that we are told of but rather one that is situated in a particular moment. The interview process is not thought of as a space in which the interviewer is tapping into a reservoir of knowledge, rather this process is negotiated (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, p. 3). Therefore, it should be recognized that how these members articulate their identity must account for how these identities are co-constructed. For example, what questions I ask, as well as how they want their identities to be interpreted as opposed to what they ‘really’ feel or think of their identity. In addition, Mavroudi (2007) looking at the Palestinian diaspora argues that identities are used strategically. The current study looking at politically active members (for the most part)

it can be argued that identities are both ‘situated’ as well as ‘more strategically’ used. However, the interviewees did not frame themselves as using their identities in a strategic manner. This can be attributed to them not realizing that they are or they knew to admit that would not be politically astute. Nonetheless, the strategic use of identity should be accounted for when understanding identity negotiations. The argument can be made that all identities are used strategically, however how cognizant individuals are or are willing to express this reality varies.

The underlying assumption in the media discourse is that Tamils are all Tigers and Tigers are all terrorists. ‘Their’ values are seen as irreconcilable with those of Canadians. They are seen as incompatible and thereby denied entry and representation in the public sphere. The interpretation of popular discourses as anti-Tamil and the acknowledgement that the media is a powerful transmitter of popular opinion has impacted the construction of Tamil Canadian identity. Tamil Canadians are creating new narratives of belonging that both reinforce and reject the discourses that place them outside the mainstream. They are not seeking recognition as minorities but rather making distinctive citizenship claims as equal members of Canadian society. The demonstrations were an expression of this citizenship claim over Canadian public spaces and the nation. Misrecognition as argued by Taylor creates a sense of marginalization amongst Canadian Tamils while also asserting an almost defiant Canadian identity.

#### *Demonstrating for transnational political and cultural practices*

The interviewees’ aversion of popular constructions of their identity resulted in their re-articulation of multiculturalism. They postulated a multiculturalism that better reflects their lived realities as opposed to the one constructed by state and popular discourses. A form of multiculturalism that is not premised solely within the nation-state. To be truly multicultural it must be recognized that the nation became multicultural through migration and these ties are not completed with the migration process. Jason who himself was not involved felt that Canada does have an obligation to help the demonstrators simply due to Canada’s multicultural nature:

*They have a duty as their country being multicultural to help any country that is in need.*  
(Jason, 20, male, student)

Carrie articulates a similar sentiment, helping Sri Lanka is to help Canadian citizens:

*We are a pocket that lives in Canada how is the Canadian government going to help this diaspora or any diaspora for that matter. I think that was an issue that really came out. Is the Canadian government going to help the citizens in this country...Especially with Canada with a very multicultural society we have people from all over the world making up what Canada is. And if we don't give back to that, if we don't um truly represent the people that elect us then how, like I don't feel like that is Canada at all.* (Carrie, 19, female, student)

Marie speaks to the point that the demonstrations and the activism by the Tamil Canadian community was a (re) articulation of Canadian multiculturalism and in the process Canadian national identity:

*[Talking about the protests] like the work we have done in the Thamil community kind of pushes that front even more. That front that you know Canada shouldn't just be a place you are accepted to live peacefully but, but you should also push for your multicultural identity, or your identity within the community.* (Marie, 27, female, engineer)

Baasha extends this argument in stating that multiculturalism creates an obligation for international solidarity:

*[When talking about other groups] They are fighting a similar war that we are and we need to be untied and that's, that's multiculturalism. When we are all together and we are all fighting for the same thing which is unity...* (Baasha, 24, male, investment manager).

#### 4.6. CONCLUSION

The interview analysis demonstrates that second generation members are well aware of popular discourses on both 'Tamil' identity and 'Canadian' identity within a Canadian multiculturalism framework. There is an understanding that Tamil identities in popular discourses are homogenized and marginalized. Second generation members speak of experiences of discrimination growing up which they draw on in explaining how the

demonstrations were portrayed. These discourses were attributed to and indicative of the weaknesses of current understandings of multiculturalism. These members renegotiate these discourses in forming their identities, both being formed by them and in resistance to them. Thereby, illustrating how multiculturalism and Canadian citizenship is contested. The interviewees spoke to their renegotiation of Canadian multiculturalism and its failures. They asserted the need for more nuanced understanding of the Canadian identity as one that incorporates the diasporic realities of Canada's people, in the process rearticulating multiculturalism.

Viewing multiculturalism through a diasporic identity lens allows addressing the four criticisms discussed earlier. Both the media analysis and the interview data reveals that diasporic identities are set apart by 'real Canadians' as 'multiculture others'. Diasporic identities are marginalized within current manifestation of multiculturalism. Although recognized in Canadian society this recognition comes without any actual 'power'. This was demonstrated by the lack of an adequate response by the Canadian government to the concerns of this community. Diasporic 'Tamil identity' is seen as culturally incompatible with 'Canadian identity'. Their demands are seen as simply terrorist grievances which justifies inaction by the Canadian government. The (re) focus of multiculturalism to one of 'selling diversity' discriminates against diasporic groups that are not seen as economically productive or viable. Certain groups' treatments are reflective of this fact. The Tamil diaspora being a refugee population are deemed such an undesirable group. The demonstrations were framed as being disruptive of the Canadian economy and the demonstrators were seen as non-productive citizens.

The criticisms of multiculturalism explored illustrate the need for a reformulation of Canadian multiculturalism (which shapes Canadian national identity). Firstly, I advocate a move towards a more critical multiculturalism that incorporates transnational political and cultural practices. Secondly, a form of citizenship that allows for a more nuanced understanding of multiculturalism as articulated by Canadian Tamils. Critical multiculturalism acknowledges the structural reasons for inequality and is open to critique and challenge. It requires that the state be prepared to question its values and its inequalities (Nesbitt-Larking, 2008, 351-352). It holds that white mainstream culture controls systems of knowledge and representation, cultural and institutional practices, and

social relations. Critical multiculturalism essentially is the right of minorities to challenge the current manifestations of multiculturalism that ignore the system of power of the dominant culture (Henry & Tator, 1999, p. 99).

Critical multiculturalism is founded on the idea that identities are multiple and fluid and takes into account their historical context. This form of multiculturalism emphasizes the political value of individual and group agency and their demands for recognition (Nesbitt-Larking, 2008, p. 359). It centres on the idea of empowerment and resistance to oppression, the transformation of social, cultural and economic institutions, and the dismantling of dominant cultural hierarchies, structures, and systems of representation (Henry, Mattis, Rees, & Tator, 2006, p. 50). The articulation of Canadian Tamil identity is precisely this form of resistance to oppression. To recognize such identities would be to move towards a more critical multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism according to Nederveen Pieterse is global in its nature but it is still conceived of within the confines of the nation-state. The political theories and laws that shape current discussions of multiculturalism are seen as inherent and deal with multiculturalism within this taken for granted assumptions. Multiculturalism understood in this manner is just the down streaming of global politics and political economy. However, we live in a world in which cultural belonging, social solidarity and political responsibility cannot be separated along lines of nation-states. Therefore, multiculturalism must be the means in which to rework relations of power on a global level (Pieterse, 2001). If multiculturalism is to include global engagement, it must engage with the world's conflict. Therefore, multiculturalism and foreign policy cannot be treated separately (Pieterse, 2007).

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

This thesis using the political demonstrations of 2008-2009 by Canadians of the Tamil community explored popular understandings of diasporic identities within a Canadian multiculturalism framework and second generation SLT's experiences of multinationalism within a Canadian singular nationalist framework and their reinterpretations of the Canadian nationalist project. Analyzing identity through a framework that views identity construction as a process of power, representation, and discourse this thesis set out to explore implications of popular constructions on the diasporic subjectivity. Employing Fairclough's discourse analysis to editorials concerning the demonstrations it was found that popular discourse on Canadian Tamil identity was seen as one of terrorism and an uncommitment to Canada and 'Canadian ideals'. The Canadian Tamil identity was seen as antithetical to the Canadian national identity, in the process demonstrating the limitations of current manifestations of multiculturalism. Once the findings from the discourse analysis were substantiated, drawing on Kathleen Hall's (2002) conception of power, identity/subjectivity, and resistance in formulating identity it was important to see how second generation SLT's negotiated these constructions in shaping their identities, maintaining their ethno-national identities, and asserting their 'Canadian' identity. The resistive practices of second generation members were embodied by the political demonstrations, contesting the 'Canadian' identity promoted by popular discourses. The political demonstrations acted as sites of identity summation. They exemplified the attempts by these members to problematize diasporic identity as a 'Canadian identity'. The assertion of diasporic identity as compatible with the Canadian national identity advocated a move towards a multiculturalism situated in a global framework which allows for the incorporation of these forms of identities. Group identities extend beyond borders and thereby recognition entails recognizing issues that exceed borders.

The observances made during this study are consistent with the literature and provide new insights. The findings confirm that multiculturalism is a defining feature of Canadian national identity, espoused both by popular discourses as well as by second generation diaspora members. It has been internalized by the interviewees and they situate their identity within this discourse. Some, including Allahar (1998) and Elabor-Idemudia (2005) argue that multiculturalism is a means in which to conceal and entrench



power relations by offering a discourse that even the ‘other’ uses. The interviewees acknowledge this reality however they do not passively accept the power relations proscribed by multiculturalism discourses. They recognize its weaknesses but utilize the discourses to frame their issues. Although the interviewees themselves adhere to notions of ‘real Canadians’ as being white (in almost total contradiction) simultaneously they view themselves as ‘real Canadians’.

The media analysis demonstrates that racism is not just based on notions of race but is also framed in terms of cultural compatibility. The idea of culture is dictated by a notion of ‘multicultural fundamentalism’ (Fleras, 2004). This is a view that understands cultures in terms of their most superficial characteristics. The findings are in line with Mackey (2002) who holds cultures are received as long as they are loyal to the Canadian nation building project which maintains its power by being able to be normalized. Those that are viewed as not sharing similar beliefs are ‘othered’. Arat-Koc argues that the ‘war on terror’ has led to a (re) whitening of Canadian identity. Those that do not feel connected to this ‘Western civilization’ feel alienated which diminishes their sense of political community. Substantiated in this literature the media analysis illustrates how security discourses that are a result of the ‘war on terror’ subvert multiculturalism discourses. However, this thesis demonstrates that Canadian Tamils’ reconceptualization of these discourses allow them to resist these representations. Therefore, Arat-Koc’s argument should recognize how other discourses are drawn upon to resist the (re) whitening of Canadian identity.

In terms of literature on the second generation the study is in line with work by Rajiva (2006) and Zhou (2001) who found that there is a different sense of marginalization amongst these members. SLT second generation members feel they have adopted ‘host’ identities and internalized principles of multiculturalism as propagated by official policies and discourses. However, social realities do not live up to these doctrines. This study also adds to Sundar’s (2008) work on South Asian youth’s strategic use of identities, this idea of ‘Browning it up’ or ‘Bringing down the Browning’, to garner resources. This study found that hybrid identities do not necessarily entail subverting one’s identity to accommodate another. Rather, the interviewees’ ‘Canadian’ and ‘Tamil’ identities are simultaneously enacted. There needs to be a move towards recognizing

these realities as opposed to viewing identities through a simple binary lens of either or, which then informs multiculturalism discourses.

The findings correlate with Charles Taylor's (1994) argument that people expect to see their identities and beliefs reflected in societal institutions. In this case it was to be reflected in foreign and domestic policies. In line with Radhakrishnan (2003) Tamil Canadians formulated their own versions of a hybrid identity, an identity that does not necessarily coincide with popular constructions of their identities. The demonstrations can be viewed as the attempt to find legitimacy for these identities. Bannerji (2000) argues that the multiculturalism policy reduces political issues into one of culture, which is relegated to the private sphere. These demonstrations show that the open display of identities was beyond exhibition of culture but a palpable attempt to reconfigure political representations. The interviewees also argued that the demonstrations were an opportunity for mainstream Canadians to engage in discussions about issues in Sri Lanka, thereby exercising two-way integration. Kernerman (2005) argues that the form of integration supported by current manifestations of multiculturalism is unidirectional. Immigrant groups are expected to give up their values and adopt those of the 'host' country as demonstrated by the media analysis. However, for the interviewees the opportunity for discussion was an attempt at more equitable two way integration. There is still concern over how successful this integration will be, as well as who continues to dictate it. However, this does demonstrate resistive practices exhibited by Canadian Tamils.

Although official multiculturalism is supposedly set out to contest exclusion, popular and dominant discourses in society continuously reconstruct dominance. The resistive political practices of Canadian Tamils, embodied by demonstrations and activism, contest the cultural essentialism promoted by popular discourse. The diasporic nature of the political engagement articulated the hybrid and global dimensions of the lives of second generation Canadian Tamils. The experiences of discrimination and the recognition of boundaries of belonging in Canada have reaffirmed these identities. Canadian Tamils are creating new identifications that challenge these boundaries of belonging, demonstrating they are not passive recipients of dominant discourses.

The current study illustrates the need for changes. The thesis demonstrated that to misrecognize diasporic identities is to delimit citizenship which has wider implications for political engagement. Mavroudi (2008) argues that the form of citizenship that is bestowed influences the effectiveness of political participation (p. 58). Following this argument if current citizenship is defined in terms of a nationally bounded identity it disallows for effective political participation for groups that engage in 'global politics'. This then is not only a hindrance to their involvement in 'homeland' politics but also their engagement in 'host' society. As the analysis revealed, becoming involved in 'homeland' politics actually led to a greater attachment to Canadian society. Thereby, there needs to be a move towards a more encompassing multiculturalism that allows for these forms of citizenship.

The study also demonstrated the important role media plays in constructing identities. Since minorities do not have access to mainstream media they do not have an opportunity to reconstruct national identities in the same capacity. Therefore, there needs to be a more equitable space within mainstream media in which minorities are able to play a role in constituting society. For the community and individuals there must be an attempt to recognize the importance of these popular discourses and a move towards a rearticulation of these identities.

More research needs to be focused on popular discourses. There should be a move beyond looking simply at state and official discourses when formulating, enacting, and evaluating policies and their implications. In terms of future research there is much that was not covered in the current thesis. Research needs to be done not only on minority negotiations of these constructs but also ethnographic research on how the 'mainstream' recognizes these constructions. Also, work should be done on how the constructions of the 'other' inform 'mainstream' identity formations. This thesis did not focus on minority media productions. It would be interesting to see what discourses emerge in those outlets, how they draw upon and negotiate popular discourses. This thesis only focused on the second generation and it would be of interest to see how both first and third generations will continue to negotiate these constructions.

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## **Appendix 1- Sample questions**

List of sample questions:

### **Stage one (general questions)**

1. (If not born in Canada) Did you come directly to Canada? [If they remember] how would you compare your experience in that country to Canada?
2. What were your first impressions of Toronto?
3. What was/is the composition of your neighbourhood growing up, was it similar, different?
4. How was your high school experience? What was the composition of your school? What kind of people were there?
5. How were Tamils treated at school and in your neighbourhood?
6. What ethnicities are/were your friends?
7. What is 'Tamil' to you and what is 'Canadian' to you?
8. Do you think that your experience as a Tamil is any different from other ethnic groups?
9. Do you feel that being from a country with conflict makes you different from other groups?
10. Have you been to Sri Lanka? [If so how was that experience? How did you feel there? Did you feel connected or disconnected?]

### **Stage 2**

1. How did you become aware of issues in Sri Lanka?
2. How did you get involved in the events?
3. Why did you get involved?
4. Do you think the events had positive or negative impacts?
5. What did you see at these events?
6. What did you notice about other second generation participants at these events?
7. How were these events portrayed, were they portrayed negative or positively?



8. What did you friends think of the events? What did your non-Tamil friends think? What were some of the debates you had about the events?

### **Stage 3**

1. There are two debates concerning multiculturalism, one that Canada is a great multicultural nation where everyone is accepted equally and able to practice their culture and the other argument is that although there are many cultures there are hidden forms of racism, hierarchies of groups. What do you think about this?

2. How do you think growing up in this sort of multicultural environment impacted you?

3. How did the events impact mainstream 'Canadians'?

4. Before these events would you say that you participated in 'Sri Lankan Tamil' culture, has this changed now?

5. How did these events impact Sri Lanka?

6. What impact did it have on the diaspora?

8. Do you have a different sense of being Canadian after the events? Do you have a different sense of being Tamil after the events?

9. Do you think the Canadian government handled the event positively or negatively?

10. How were the Tamils depicted in the media, how do you feel about this depiction?

11. Some argued that listing the LTTE was good, some say that it was not, what did you think?

14. What were some of the implications for Tamils as a result of this labelling?

15. Now with the end of the war what do you think are the potential effects of those labels?

16. What do you think should happen now in Sri Lanka and what should Canada's role be?

17. What role do you think second generation youth will play in this?

**VITA AUCTORIS**

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